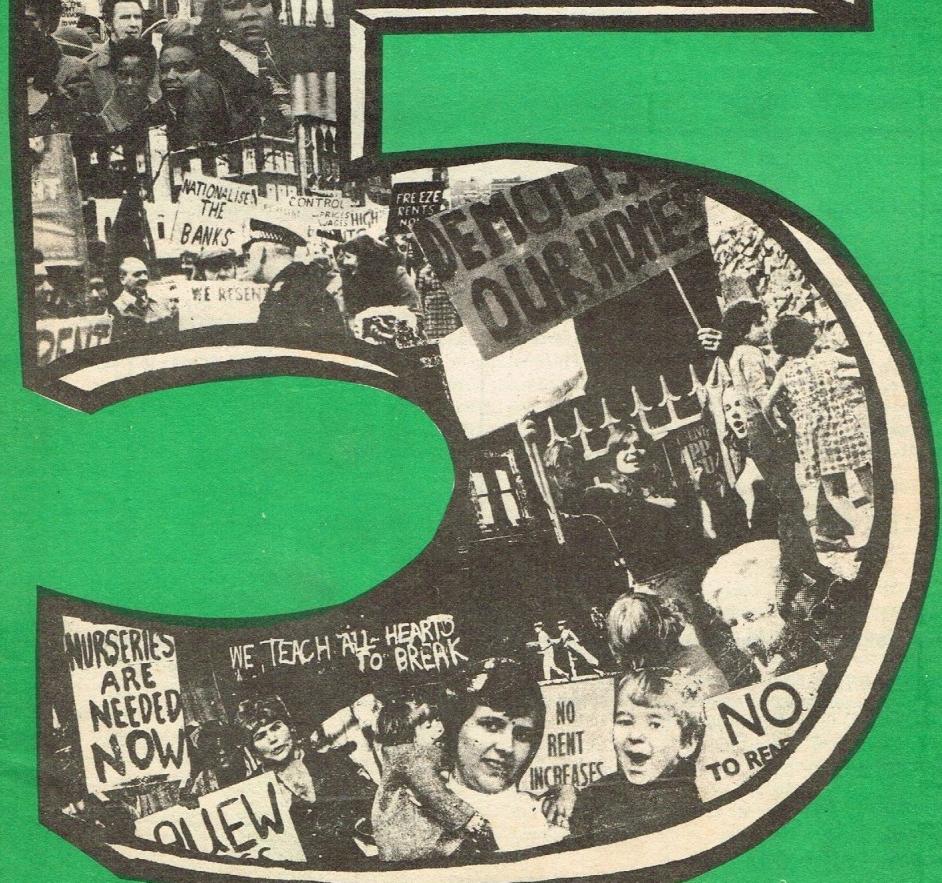


# COMMUN ACTION

No.30 March - April 1977 25p

review of the last five years  
**5th BIRTHDAY issue**

\* Cardiff property deal \* Street murals  
\* Running advice \* service cities  
Nursery campaigns \* Inner cities



# COMMUNITY ACTION

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## New Price for Community Action

We have been forced to put up the price of the magazine after nearly two years, in order to cover our costs. The rise is a big one - nearly 40% - but this is necessary partly because we've been putting the magazine out at a loss for the last few issues, and partly because postage is about to go up yet again.

Here is the new scale of charges :

Single Copy : 25p  
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businesses etc, subscription : £2.50  
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Package of back issues : £3.40

In addition, in order to encourage distribution we are offering discounts on bulk orders : 3p off each copy for between 6 and 9 copies, 4p for between 10 and 14, and 5p for 15 copies or more. (See form on page 38)

## Thanks...

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has sent us donations - many of which come with subscriptions. Not only is this very encouraging for us - it helps to keep the price of the magazine down. So please keep on sending them in.

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# NEWS & VIEWS

## LONDON : ST AGNES PLACE



### SQUATTERS & TENANTS

### VS. POLICE, PRESS AND PARTY POLITICS

Lambeth Council, under its right-wing leader David Stimpson, has one of the worst housing management records in London. There are over 2,000 empty council properties, 17,600 families on the Waiting List, thousands in sub-standard accommodation, and no provision for single people. Last year the council spent almost £12m on Bed-and-Breakfast accommodation and shoved many more families into reception centres.

At the same time they have been gutting and vandalising habitable homes, enormously increasing repairs charges, and raising rents twice in the last year.

### LABOUR SPLIT

In fact the ruling Labour Group is split over housing policy: a recent council report claiming an improvement in the homeless situation was dismissed by one councillor on the Left: "Our present policies are ruthless", said Ted Knight, "We are merely ignoring the problem of homelessness and these figures are a whitewash."

### SQUATTERS ORGANISE

Over the last five years, squatting in Lambeth has increased in size and support - a direct result of the council's mismanagement of its housing stock. The vast majority squat in houses scheduled for demolition, or for rehabilitation at some far off time. Some of these have been empty for up to twenty years.

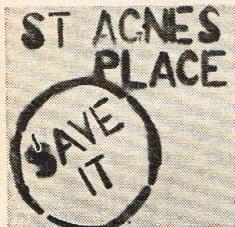
It has been the organised squatters - as in Heath Road, Villa Road, Rectorry Gardens and St Agnes Place - who have brought housing issues to a head by challenging the council's policy. Individual squatters can be easily evicted, and individual council tenants - especially immigrants and unemployed - frequently fear victimisation if they so much as sign a petition, as we found when we were canvassing for support. Other local tenants, despite media coverage, have come to support us wholeheartedly, and we have been very careful to explain our position to them.

Most of the squatting groups are closely linked. We support each other's meetings, demonstrations and occupations, learning from each other's experiences and sharing information and activities. Outside support has opened up communications, and we have learned to print posters and leaflets at a local community workshop.

### 18 YEARS OF INDECISION

St Agnes Place is a street of 49 houses hemmed in on both sides by two parks. As long ago as 1959 the LCC decided to demolish the street and 'consolidate' the parks. In 1971 control was transferred to Lambeth, who continued to empty the houses until 1974 when, following tenant and squatter action, they decided to demolish, despite having no plan for consolidating the park, no money to do so until after 1981, and no permission to close the road.

All this when the houses could have been given a five-year life at no cost to the council. But no. They continued emptying and gutting with police protection, despite us reclaiming some of the houses and ensuring press coverage of their activities.



### THE ATTACK

Then on January 19th at 5am, 250 police with dogs surrounded and sealed off the street, keeping our supporters out and us from going to get them. Someone - not us - had informed the press. We got on to our own press contacts, the Law Centre (who had often represented us) and other squatting groups. For the first few hours we were in a daze. By 8am there were three large cranes with balls and chains ready to demolish the houses. It was all too massive for us to think clearly.

By 7.30 the Law Centre had informed the council and demolition contractors Gorst & Co that they were going to the High Court for an injunction to stop demolition. Both Mr Gentle, a director in charge of the operation, and Mr Davey from the Housing Department chose to ignore the letter announcing this.

It was obvious to everyone that this was no normal demolition procedure but an attack on any possible rehabilitation plans for St Agnes Place. It had been secretly planned by Ald. Stimpson and a couple of allies, following the Labour Group meeting in which the majority had voted to reopen the case for St Agnes

Place. It was a crisis in his own political career, resulting from the split between Left and Right with growing opposition to the council's housing policies and the attack on squatters.

The evening before, we had confronted Malcom Noble, another right winger and chairman of the Housing Committee, on Radio London. This was an object lesson on the need to be fully prepared when confronting an experienced public speaker on the 'official' media. He took our breath away by making the case for speedy demolition as if he represented a united council! Significantly in view of what happened, his response to our list of supporters was, "Well, we'll see how much your local support will help you."

### A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME?

The council's unprecedented action on Jan 19th may well be a taste of things to come if the Criminal Trespass Bill is passed. But then tenants, workers, students or the unemployed could face prison and a criminal record if they occupy in defence of their rights.

### PRESS IGNORES COUNCIL ILLEGALITIES

Meanwhile the council's illegality goes unchecked: through their contractors they broke several bye-laws in the scramble to wreck as many houses as possible before the injunction came through.

The press turned a blind eye to this. We worked hard to get coverage and explained our position at length to reporters. The result was an improvement on their traditional squatter-bashing, but ignored several important questions:

\* Organised squatting politically challenges the power of the local council.

\* Local opposition to council housing policies is able to be ignored.

\* The leader of the council enlisted massive police protection for his desperate political action, and his authority to do this went unchallenged.

\* The split in the council was critical at the time, but has been healed because of the impending local elections.

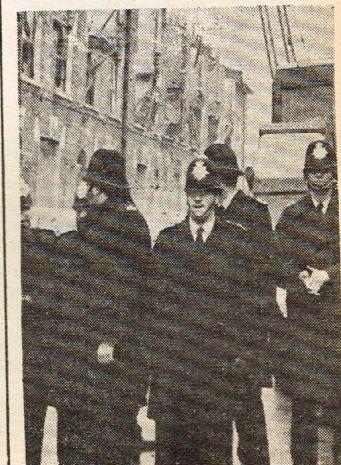
## LOCAL LABOUR MOVEMENT FLOUTED

Support for our position is widespread in the Borough: it includes, as well as other squatting groups, 100 social workers and thousands of local residents who have signed petitions, the Vassall, Stockwell and N. Lambeth Neighbourhood Councils, several local Labour Party Wards and the Lambeth Trades Council.

But Ald. Stimpson's respect for the local labour movement is limited: "If it weren't for the squatters' pressure", he said recently, "we'd have had all these houses down months ago and nobody would have noticed."

The St. Agnes Place Housing Defence Fund supports the legal action being taken by local ratepayers against the Council.

Further information from 01-735 6123.





A Bill is going through Parliament which will make occupations, sit-ins and some forms of picketing criminal. This is an attack upon our right to take direct action in defence of our jobs, homes and living standards.

## Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law

The new criminal trespass offences contained in the Government's Criminal Law Bill have now been through their Committee stage in the House of Lords and are heading for the House of Commons. In Committee the Tory Lords proposed sweeping amendments which would extend the offences to draconian lengths. The Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) is holding a national demonstration on March 19, to call on Labour MPs to throw out any and all criminal trespass offences in the House of Commons debate, and to publicise the importance of direct action to the struggles of the labour movement and community groups.

### Automatic mass arrests

Community Action No.29 outlined in detail how these new offences threaten occupations, whether they are of factories, colleges, town halls, rent offices or other public buildings, or squatting in

empty houses. In any of these situations, the occupiers would be likely to commit one or more of the new offences, and the police would be able to intervene at an early stage to break up the action.

The Tory amendments intend to make mass arrests in any occupation totally automatic. They want to make trespass in any circumstances quite simply a crime; and to give all property owners whose property is trespassed upon the right to use violence to evict the occupiers. The Tories have taken the principle embodied in the Government's Bill (that of criminal trespass) and extended it to its logical conclusion. In contrast, the government Bill is much more subtle and devious - the five specific offences link trespass with 'threats of violence', 'offensive weapons', 'displacing residential occupiers', etc. and at first glance on paper they appear almost reasonable and harmless. It is only when the details of the offences are examined and put in their legal context that it

is clear that in practice the Government's Bill would have consequences almost as serious to direct action as the Tories' version.

### Government not 'committed'

In the face of the Tory amendments the Government is now wavering, stating that it is not "committed" to the Bill as it now stands. The extent of their concessions to the Tory Lords will be revealed in the Report stage in the House of Lords, expected in mid February.

CACTL's campaign against the Bill is coming to a peak with Public Meetings and Regional Conferences taking place all over the country (contact CACTL for details of what's happening in your area. See

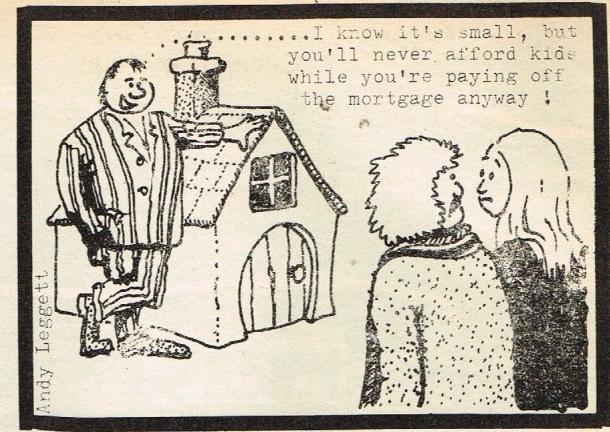
MARCH  
AGAINST  
CRIMINAL TRESPASS  
LAW  
  
March 19: London  
Details on page 6

C/A no.29, p38 for address). At the beginning of January, the TUC General Council finally came out against four out of the five offences in the Bill (they didn't consider the offence relating to trespassing on embassy property), and the Labour party National Executive is likely to come out against the Bill in the near future. Pressure from the rank and file of the labour movement is necessary to push this "opposition" out of the filing cabinet and into the streets.

#### **March details**

The national demonstration against the Bill is on March 19, which will be about the time the debate in the House of Commons starts in earnest. CACTL urges all trade union, student, tenants', women's and community groups to support the demonstration, by bringing their banners as well as their members. The march starts at Cardington Street (next to Euston Station) at 1.45 pm and marches past the occupied Elizabeth Garrat Anderson women's hospital to a rally at Highbury Fields.

For further information, leaflets, local contact addresses, and speakers, contact: CACTL, c/o 6 Bowden St, London SE 11, tel. 01-289-5877.



## **LONDON SLIDIE JO - THE LATEST**

In the last issue of Community Action we described our problems with Uncle Jo and the history of our struggle, taking it up to the CPO Inquiry on October 19th, 1976.

#### **What purpose did the Inquiry fulfill?**

Despite the uncooperative attitude of the Dept. of the Environment's Inspector, we were able to put our case in support of the CPO and this, together with the wide publicity which resulted has clearly generated a great deal of public interest and concern.

With hindsight, we see that the Public Inquiry should not therefore be considered as an end in itself but as a means of gaining attention and support.

#### **Uncle Jo backs down**

Having refused all opportunities to negotiate with the Council up until the Inquiry, Uncle Jo was suddenly obliged to change course. Presumably in order to avoid all the unpleasant publicity about his dubious activities which he knew the Inquiry would bring out, and almost certainly under pressure from his creditors to settle, Uncle Jo struck an 11th hour deal with the Council. The "gentleman's agreement" was as follows:-

Uncle Jo would withdraw his objections to the CPO and voluntarily sell the properties at £450,000; the Council for their part would not bring any evidence from three Harassment Officers at the Inquiry.

#### **Tenants assoc. won't compromise**

The TA was of course not party to this arrangement, and after three years of being mucked about by Uncle Jo we were determined to go ahead and present our evidence as planned.

The Inspector was not so keen however. She refused to allow the TA to be heard first, despite the fact that many people had only a limited amount of time and many had to

**How To Fight For Better Housing Conditions**

We are going to completely revise and reprint How To Fight For Better Housing Conditions. We have sold 8000 copies since August 1973 and have now completely sold out. The revised edition will have a much greater emphasis on the organisation and tactics of repairs and improvement campaigns. We would like comments and criticisms of the previous edition from groups who have used it in their campaigns. In particular we would like to know which parts groups found most useful and suggestions as to what the revised pamphlet should contain. Please send or phone your comments to Community Action by April 15th at the latest.

get back to work. The Inquiry was almost adjourned when our angry members refused to allow it to continue without an undertaking that we would be heard on the first day.

### Loan sanction

Since Uncle Jo no longer objected to the CPO, the Council could now go ahead and buy the properties in the usual way. Due to Government controls

which he'd failed to pass on for the last two years ...

### Decision on loan sanction

In December we learned that the DoE had decided to postpone a decision on loan sanction until the result of the CPO was known. Another twist! However, they didn't stick to this decision for very long and at the end of



Uncle Jo's houses in Greenwich

over public expenditure all Council purchases are subject to DoE approval. The Council immediately applied for this "loan sanction".

### Puzzle

The whole process now turned into a complicated puzzle - CPO? loan sanction? Which would come first? Could one work without the other? Which was most important?

The CPO clearly implied acquisition AND REDEVELOPMENT of the WHOLE AREA (more than just Uncle Jo's properties) but Loan Sanction concerned ONLY ACQUISITION and ONLY UNCLE JO'S PROPERTIES.

Remember, we think that the WHOLE AREA SHOULD BE DEMOLISHED AND REDEVELOPED BY THE COUNCIL.

### Rates shock

For several weeks we played this puzzle game and became thoroughly frustrated. Meanwhile, just to keep us on our toes, the Council caught up with Uncle Jo's rate arrears. This meant that many tenants had to start paying their rent to the Council rather than to Uncle Jo to make up for the rates



### Double blow

Then, on 11 February, we suffered a double blow: the CPO decision came out in the morning - IT WAS REFUSED. And, as if by a miracle, Uncle Jo had reappeared and signed the contract. He had obviously and deliberately been avoiding all contacts until he knew whether he would be able to squeeze an extra few thousand pounds from the Council by selling under a successful CPO, rather than voluntarily

as he had previously agreed. (because he could also claim compensation for solicitors and surveyors fees on top of the price for the houses.)

Panicked by the CPO refusal, he now seems all too willing to honour the agreement he had disregarded for the last three weeks. He is now demanding a £1000 per week as a 'fine' because he claims the council is keeping him waiting!.

### White elephant

What should the Council do now?

the DoE has made it clear that it is against demolition and redevelopment but WILL permit the Council to buy Uncle Jo's properties. Up till now the Council has always agreed with both the TA's objectives, i.e.

- Council acquisition of all the properties;
- Demolition and redevelopment for the whole area.

The TA must press on with its campaign and the first step is obviously for the Council to go ahead and buy the properties.

By the time the next issue is out, these decisions will have been made and we hope to be able to inform you of the outcome.

Glenforth and Glenister Estate TA, c/o 1 Collerston Rd, London SE10.

## GLASGOW RECENT NEWS OF ANTI-DAMPNESS CAMPAIGN

I would like to describe some of the events which the campaign has gone through in the past 3 months, and the action we've taken.

(See CA no25 p6 and CA no26 p8 for further information about earlier stages in this campaign for remedial work to combat dampness and condensation in these 5-year-old Gorbals flats.

### Public Meeting

600 people attended a meeting in a local community centre.



**The ultimate solution to high rise problems? Flats being blown up in America.**

District and Regional councillors and our MP were present. Many tenants were angry and it was a very stormy meeting. All the elected representatives gave the campaign their support to eradicate the dampness. It was agreed that these homes are a health hazard and steps should be taken to free the tenants from the hell that dampness is creating in their homes. (It is estimated that between 40% and 75% of the flats have a serious dampness problem, and some tenants have run up electricity bills of over £100 for a 2 month period trying to remedy this 'condensation'.) Assurances were made by the District Councillors that they would request a rents and rates freeze, and also our MP stated he would support the campaign and the councillors in our fight. The meeting was considered a complete success because it got extensive publicity. This was to the benefit of the campaign because it forced the District Council to recognise that the houses are damp, a thing they had refused to do until then.

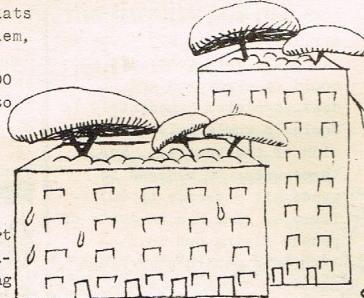
#### Housing minister visits

On 20 December, Hugh Brown MP (Minister responsible for housing in Scotland) visited the Hutchesontown area. He was accompanied by Scottish Development Department and housing officials. They saw many houses and got first hand experience of the deplorable

conditions. It was hoped that from this central government would have a greater understanding of our problems, and seek a speedy solution.

#### Councillors & dampness committee meet

On 23 January 1977 the elected representatives and the Dampness Committee had a meeting chaired by our local MP. Assurances were given that no damp



houses would be re-let and also information would be sought regarding rehousing, a survey and compensation for damage caused to clothing and furniture by the dampness.

#### Public meeting in local school

On 10 February, the campaign had a meeting to which 400 people turned up. Again it was a heated meeting, many tenants were deeply concerned about rehousing. Regional and District councillors were there. We were informed that

people were being rehoused, but we questioned the priority of the cases, because many people with exceedingly damp houses were not getting the priority they deserved. Still no date for the proposed new survey was given. Again written information was requested, but still no answer. We were told that damp houses were not to be re-let, but this we proved was not the case. It seemed that the information councillors gave us conflicted with that given by the Housing Department.

So the present situation is:

- rehousing is piecemeal and unmethodical;
- no date has been set yet for the new survey;
- no information has been forthcoming from the Housing Management Department regarding their policy on re-letting damp houses.

In two weeks we hope to have a meeting with elected representatives and the campaign committee, where we hope to have an answer to some of the above questions. Next week we will be taking a deputation to the Housing Management Department to speak to senior officials about our situation. We aim to have our problem aired and agree on a solution.

As you can see, our campaign

has gone through a very active period and this will continue until something definite is done.

Hutchesontown & Laurieston TA,  
Laurieston Information Centre,  
Block 80, Stirlingfaul Place,  
Glasgow G5 9BS. 041-429 3254.

## ACTION ON DAMPNESS ELSEWHERE

### ... in Scotland

A petition has been raised by a group of Kirkaldy tenants in the Thornton area who claim that dampness is making their lives a misery. In Arbroath the local Labour party is planning to hold a public meeting concentrating on this issue. In Galashiels both council and Scottish Special Housing Assoc-

iation are involved and local tenants are starting to make a noise. In Edinburgh action groups have started to campaign in many areas, and in Glasgow a recent District Council decision to spend over £70,000 on 232 houses in Milton went through without the publicity so necessary in Hutchesontown.

### ... in London

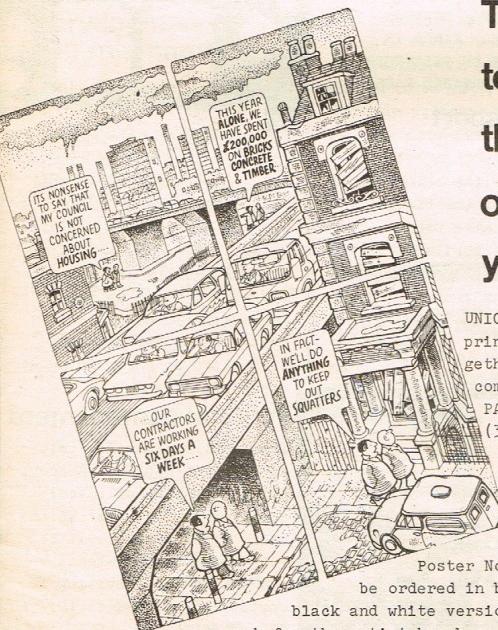
The Surrey Lane Tenants Association sent an architect's report to Wandsworth Council about the dampness affecting 42% of the flats and maisonettes on their 4-year-old estate. It is clear that both design and building faults are causing mould to grow in the flats. Because the Council has shown no serious concern about tenants' complaints, some tenants are now taking court action against the council. (More about this in a future issue. This information comes from "Lower Down" no29).

## S. YORKSHIRE GOVERNMENT TRIES TO SABOTAGE SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY

Ever since local government reorganisation, the strongly Labour controlled County Council in South Yorkshire has tried to promote public transport as an alternative to increased car usage.

Bus fares in Sheffield have not increased for over 2 years. In Doncaster and Barnsley fares were increased just over a year ago to bring all fares throughout the County to the same level. It now costs a mere 6p to travel 2 miles, 8p for 3 miles and 9p for 4 miles. This compares with 10p and 12p for 2 and 4 miles in the West Midlands (the next cheapest transport authority in the

**The Council regret that, owing to the interests of big business, they are unable to fulfil their obligation to the homeless this year.**



UNION PLACE is trying, in spare moments when its printing gear is not in use by others, to get together a "community publishing" activity. It will comprise: (1) an occasional one page stick up WALL PAPER, (2) booklets on local issues by local people, (3) posters for distribution at cost.

Poster No.1 (above) size 20"x 30" can be ordered in your own Council's house colour, 50 at a time for £5 + postage on the promise that they'll be "sold" for no more than 10p each.

Poster No.2 (the window) is 20"x 30" in 5 colours and can be ordered in batches of 10 for £2.50 (25p each) + postage. A black and white version for kids to colour in is 10p each. A long search for the artist has been unsuccessful so if anyone knows who did the original drawing please get in touch.

UNION PLACE COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE  
122-124 Vassall Road, London SW9 6JB, 01-735 6123

country) and 14p and 21p for 2 and 4 miles in Merseyside.

### Low fares more passengers

This policy of low fares has been proved to work. Between March 1975 and March 1976, the total number of passengers carried increased by over 3% in Sheffield, and over 1.3% in the whole County, while every other transport authority in the country lost passengers. However, central government seems to think it knows better. Transport Minister Mr William Rodgers, told the County it must increase its fares in line with the rest of the country. The Labour Council have refused to budge. (Has the Department of the Environment ever run a bus service?)

### No grant to S.Yorks.

The crunch came at the end of January, when the Government announced the amount of transport subsidy that each County Council receives in the year 1977/78, known as the Transport Supplementary Grant (TGS).

All the Metropolitan Counties will receive a grant from the Government of about 1/3 to 1/2 of the total amount they spend on transport - except South Yorkshire. For example, Merseyside has a budget of £27million for transport, of which £13m will go on bus and rail subsidies. They will receive £8.5m in TSG. The West Midlands have a transport budget of £45m, including £15.4m bus and rail subsidies. The Government will help them

to the tune of £13.4m. But in South Yorkshire, the Government is aiding the £11.3m transport budget with a trifling £291,000 - and this is for some continuing capital expenditure to which the Government was already committed.

This compares with a TSG of £5.5m to South Yorks in 1976/77. Quite obviously, William Rodgers intends this reduction to be a punitive measure. And a deputation of 8 S.Yorks MPs, who were "unanimously in sympathy with their local government colleagues", failed to change the Minister's mind.

### Not moved by blackmail

S. Yorks County Council are thankfully not susceptible to such blackmail, and they are steadfastly refusing to increase their fares. The unfortunate result is that the County Rate will have to be increased an additional 2p in the £. Looked at another way, THE GOVERNMENT IS FORCING SOUTH YORKSHIRE RATEPAYERS TO SUBSIDIZE THE BUS SERVICES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE INCOME FROM FARES IS FALLING BECAUSE OF PASSENGERS LOST THROUGH INCREASED FARES ...

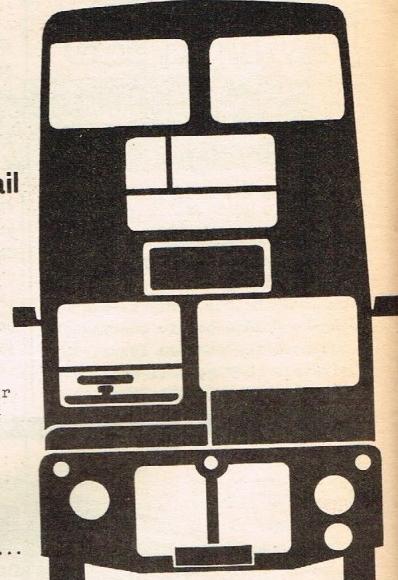
### Public transport proposals

But this looks like being only the beginning of the battle. The South Yorkshire Draft Structure Plan, published in the last few weeks, proposes continued emphasis on public transport. This involves:

- No increase in bus fares for the NEXT TEN YEARS.

- An additional 300-350 buses on the South Yorkshire fleet.
- Improvements to the bus stations in Sheffield and Barnsley.

The planners expect that motorists will begin to leave their cars at home as the cost of motoring soars and bus fares are stabilised; they estimate that by 1986 there will be a



25% increase in passengers at peak periods. And to further boost public transport, the County are seeking powers to control the number of cars using private non-residential parking (mostly office workers) and are planning to introduce "area traffic controls" - a system which gives buses priority over cars in whole areas of a town.

### Political commitment

The justification for this emphasis on public transport arises out of a political commitment. The cost of the cheap fares policy will be recouped through ratepayers and taxpayers, resulting in what the Council describes as a "redistribution of income to the benefit of the lower-paid and non-car-owning households." Is this what upsets the Labour Government?



# WANDSWORTH

Sporle Court is a 21-storey Tower Block containing 106 flats and maisonettes on Wandsworth Council's Winstanley Estate near Clapham Junction built in 1964

## TENANTS' SURVEY OF REPAIR

Towards the end of 1976, the tenants were becoming so frustrated with the stagnation of the council's transfer system, and with the continual problems of disrepair in the block that they began to organise on their own behalf. Their first move was to organise a survey of repair complaints. This showed that at least 77 units had problems - mostly of dampness and condensation, as well as general complaints about the heating and lifts. This survey went to the council in the form of a petition.

## An everyday story of housing mismanagement

Out of this action, a smaller group of tenants emerged who were particularly unhappy with the transfer situation. They decided to prepare a report detailing their cases and the problems arising from life in a high-rise block entitled 'Sporle Court - An Everyday Story of Housing Mismanagement'

The report details the situation of 21 families in the block. It includes reports by a medical officer and a public health inspector, as well as comments from a local head-mistress on the effects of high-rise life on children. The report received wide press publicity locally and had a remarkable effect on the council. After months of phone calls and letter writing to little effect, the report stirred the officers to organise a meeting to discuss the whole situation.

## Repairs put in hand

On January 27 a group of tenants met the chairman and vice chairman of the Housing Committee, three senior officers and men from the District Housing Office to put their points. The tenants drew up a 22-point agenda and pushed the members and officers for action on each point. Within a week of the meeting, many of the smaller repairs had been dealt with and others were being put in hand.



Wandsworth Council is moving towards a reconsideration of its allocation policies, with a view to not putting families in high-rise dwellings. The fundamental problem of lack of decent council housing and the difficulties of administering a system under these conditions was stressed. The tenants of Sporle Court have by no means had all their demands met, but the fight goes on. Their united action and their imagination in putting the report together has improved their conditions and their bargaining power.

## Direct Works

### Builders force Government climb-down

The proposal to allow local authority Direct Works Depts to carry out work for neighbouring councils, New Town Corporations, housing associations and other public agencies has been withdrawn by the Government.

The Tories, Liberals and some MPs on the right of the Labour Party were totally opposed to the proposals. The Government withdrew the proposals just

before the Bill was to be given a Second Reading in the House of Commons because they feared it would be defeated.

Needless to say "there was jubilation" at the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors who are coordinating the campaign against Direct Works. (See C/A 29, p.30) The campaign will continue because they claim that direct works will be "seen to be a liability for Labour in the council elections in May".

## Meanwhile in Manchester

"Our modernisation system is now so efficient that the private firms are trying to copy our methods ... and as for the maintenance section, if that is so inefficient why are other authorities asking us to do the work instead of private contractors?" states Walter Wainwright, Convenor at Manchester Direct Works Dept in a long interview with Manchester Free Press No.44. (10p + 9p post from 17 Darlington Rd, Manchester 20)



## HARINGEY

### Council changes its Tenancy conditions-as a result of C/A article?

Having exposed the fact that Haringey Council's new council Tenancy Conditions tried to

pass on to the tenants the Council's own legal responsibility for repairs to sinks, WCs, baths etc, (see CA no28 p26), we have now heard that the red-faced Council has been forced to change its Tenancy Conditions yet again!

### Charade

This means that they will again go through the whole charade of sending out Notices to Quit and granting new tenancies - once more upsetting many tenants. The new Conditions state that the Council will be responsible for keeping in good repair and working order the communal parts of the estate, pipes and wiring for heating and plumbing, baths, sinks, WCs etc. They also state, however, that the Council can make "minor amendments" (not defined) to the Conditions of Tenancy 'from time to time', as long as the tenant is informed of his/her right to terminate the Tenancy if (s)he wishes to. Thanks very much !

## WANDSWORTH

### THE DODDINGTON ESTATE - SYSTEMS BUILT SCANDAL

The Doddington Estate is the housing scandal in Wandsworth. It's one of the early sixties systems-built estates, and apart from its height and size, it's had every problem imaginable. The heating is useless, the plumbing's diabolical: raw sewage comes put into sinks and baths, there are rats and cockroaches - the lot. So far Wandsworth has committed over £1 million in trying to correct the major design defects, on top of the enormous repair and maintenance bill that estates like this run up.

### 'not of national importance'

How come the architects, structural engineers and contractors have got away with it? How did they get the contracts in the first place? In December Wandsworth Council

asked Peter Shore, the Secretary of State for the Environment, for a public inquiry. On January 13 Shore replied, refusing the inquiry on the grounds that it's "not of national importance"!

On the Doddington and New Rollo Estates alone, over 3000 tenants are having to suffer the conditions of these blocks - and every ratepayer in Wandsworth is paying for the mess.

It is a total absurdity when an appeal against the most trivial planning application gets an automatic public inquiry and yet an issue affecting the lives of thousands of tenants can be squashed at the whim of one person.

## ISLE OF DOGS BUSINESS WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Community groups on the Isle of Dogs are becoming increasingly alarmed by the activities of an American evangelical community project called the Institute of Cultural Affairs, backed by an insurance company called the Combined Insurance Company of America.

### The word is PROFIT

The organisation moved into the Isle of Dogs in early 1976 and staged a meeting of local people with 100 "consultants" as the Institute's fieldworkers are called, from the USA to "spread the word".

What is this 'word'? Well, the

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* You tighten your belts:  
\* The banks profit  
\*\*\*\*\*

1976 pre-tax profits

LLOYDS £147m up 55 per cent

BARCLAYS £198m up 39 per cent  
(excludes £40m put directly into reserves)

MIDLAND £166m up 102 per cent

NATWEST £188m up 80 per cent

### Islander investigates

They are even taking the credit for projects initiated by local community groups! The Association of Island Communities, through their paper The Islander, are now compiling a report on the ICA to expose their real aims and to prevent more Island residents being conned.

## PREVIOUS ACTION NOTES

How to organise and run public meetings. (Issue No.19)

How to organise a petition (Issue No.20)

Constitutions (Issue No.21)

Writing a Report (Issue No.22)

Lobbying (Issue No.24)

Propaganda (Issue No.27)

Membership (Issue No.28)

# THE LAST FIVE YEARS

## The struggles ahead

Community action struggles have a long history, with campaigns like the Clydeside rent strike of 1915, the late 1930's rent strikes against private landlords and councils, the squatting movement immediately after the war and a number of other campaigns to defend working class living standards. However since the mid 1960's there has been a massive increase in the number of tenants and action groups.

Community Action magazine started in February 1972 at a time when tenants associations, action groups and activists were mainly concerned with

- fighting the Housing Finance Bill
- campaigning for improvement and against wholesale redevelopment of basically sound housing
- attempting to stop motorways and roads carving up their areas
- attacking property speculation in town and city centres and the gentrification of working class neighbourhoods
- trying to force councils and private landlords to repair and improve their houses

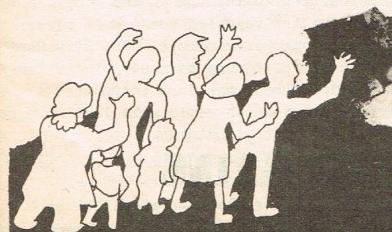
Of course tenants and action groups were also campaigning for community centres, nurseries and other facilities. Squatters action groups were helping to expose the scandal of increasing homelessness and more and more empty properties. As part of, and to support all these campaigns, there has been a growth in action and advice

centres run by groups and activists and an increasing number of community newspapers.

Now 5 years later what has been achieved? How has the situation changed? What are the important lessons for community action struggles? What will be the key issues in the struggle ahead? What follows is a broad overview. We plan to examine many of the issues raised in much more detail in future editions of C/A.

### Bulldozer Stopped... BUT IS IT AN IMPROVEMENT?

Tenants and residents were successful in stopping the slum clearance bulldozer ploughing on through



#### THE LAST 5 YEARS

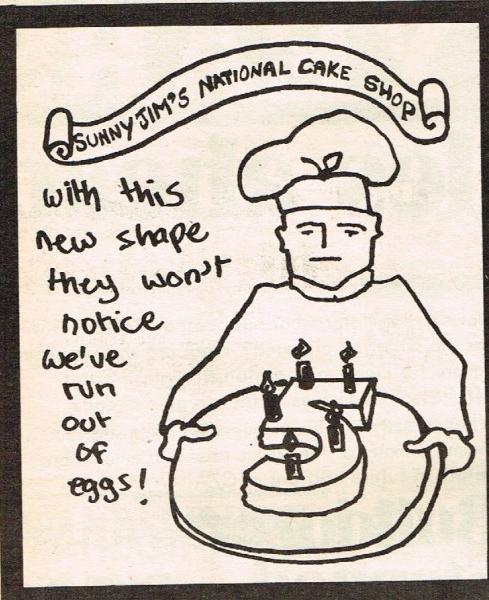
more areas of basically sound housing. For example, in Manchester resident groups fought public inquiry after public inquiry, which, combined with other action, resulted in a complete about turn by the council to improvement policies. Some groups have also forced changes in the way redevelopment is carried out e.g. Nottingham but these local gains haven't yet been applied nationally.

better than redevelopment but who owns the houses, who builds or improves them, how this is done and who benefits.

## Rent Strikes? 'TRUST YOUR MPs,' SAID HAROLD

The campaign against the Housing Finance Bill in 1971-72 didn't succeed in preventing the Bill becoming law - a law which resulted in rent increases and cuts in council housing subsidies. However, in some cases the increases were slightly smaller than they would otherwise have been and there were some important achievements - eg the 14 month Tower Hill rent strike in Kirkby, the organising of various local and regional co-ordinating committees, and the way different campaigns actively supported each others' demonstrations.

The campaign against the Bill did help to ensure that a new Labour Government in 1974 repealed key parts of it and imposed a rent freeze (but refused to support the Clay Cross councillors). But these gains have already been swept away because the same Labour Government is imposing large rent increases and massive cuts in repairs, improvement and council housebuilding.



However, the switch to improvement policy was not simply due to community action. After the financial crisis in 1967 and the cuts in public spending, improvement became a key housing policy because it was cheaper in the short term. Also the Labour Government was moving further away from its commitment to council housing, towards middle-of-the-road housing policies. The change in policy meant a large increase in the share of public money going into private housing accompanied by the expansion of housing associations - instead of an effective municipalisation programme and more and better council housing.

### Short-lived

Even this partial success was short-lived and was not all it seemed. The improvement policy relied almost entirely on owners willingly investing a lot of money - with obvious lack of results in most working class areas. The cuts in the last 2 years have almost brought the programme to a grinding halt. Furthermore, there are thousands of houses in bad condition which are neither in improvement or clearance programmes. The return to clearance on a large scale seems more and more inevitable. It's not a question of improvement being necessarily

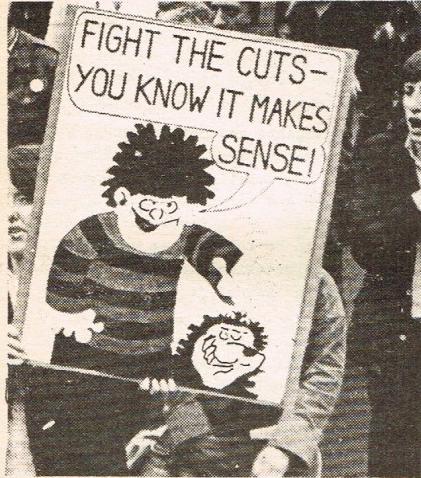
## Groups Fought the Speculators NOW THE LAND ACT

The past five years have seen the property market boom resulting in vast profits, exploitation and harassment. Group struggles against this led to occupations of empty offices and successful campaigns like Covent Garden to prevent destruction of whole areas. These campaigns were successful in exposing the scandal of speculation and the lack of security of private tenants. However, the Labour Government's response - the Community Land Act (CLA) does virtually nothing to stop or control private exploitation of land and is irrelevant to the needs of working class areas for housing, schools, etc. And since the collapse of the property boom, the property lobby (despite vehement opposition to the CLA at the time), now doesn't want the Act repealed because it gives stability to the property market. The 1974 Rent Act gave security of tenure to most private tenants but the Government has just introduced a 'review' of the Act which could well lead to more concessions to private landlords.

### OTHER GAINS

During the past 5 years tenants associations, action groups and activists have also:-

- organised and maintained tenants federations in many areas and greatly increased visits and contacts between groups.
- learnt a great deal about tactics and involving people in campaigns.
- been involved in challenging both government and business interests: this in itself has been a very important part of the political education of those involved.
- played a critical role in stopping or changing several motorway and road expansion schemes e.g. Hook Road, Cardiff and helped to push for public transport policies.
- gained community centres, nurseries, play facilities, etc. which would otherwise not have been provided.
- increased the number of repairs done by private landlords and councils.
- worked increasingly with local unions and trades councils on industrial issues and
- fought against industrial pollution e.g. Hirwaun where Welsh Gas were forced to find an alternative site for liquefied natural gas tanks.



## It Isn't Just the Cuts...

Many campaigns by tenants and action groups have been directed against the local council - because it is at the local level that many decisions are taken and resources distributed. However, what seems to be clear successes at a particular time are often short-lived, and also what is success for one group can be at the expense of another group or less organised area. The cake rarely gets any bigger, it's just cut up differently. Community action must be about getting a bigger cake and getting control of it, and not simply fighting for a bigger slice for your own group.

### THE LAST 5 YEARS

The three examples above on improvement, rents and property speculation show quite clearly the power of the financial, property and business interests and how the state operates to preserve that power.

Now more than ever tenants and action groups are forced up against the reality of the way the economic system works and in whose interest it does so. The resources for distribution at the local level have been severely cut back. Groups can and still do campaign for a community centre or to get an estate improved etc. but their chances of success are much, much less than 5 years ago. Nevertheless, it is still vital to keep demanding more and better housing, facilities and services and to keep on re-stating and increasing these demands.

## ...But the Forces Behind them

The last five years saw the Barber package of cuts intended to aid the economy, but instead profits went either overseas or into property. The situation worsened with the oil crisis in 1973. Since then:-

- inflation has soared to 15-30% a year for the last 3 years.
- the value of the £ has plummetted.
- unemployment reached 1½ m. and is likely to reach 2m.
- £8½ billion cuts in public spending in the last 2 years.
- two years of pay restraint so far.

All this has meant that living standards have fallen for the first time since the war. The cuts and wage restraint have been made to satisfy the City and foreign financiers and to attempt to regenerate industry by channelling to it more public money. There is no reason to believe that if industry does reinvest that it will create more jobs or that it will even invest in Britain.

## A Bleak Future?

If left to themselves the future the government and industry intends for us looks bleak. It is highly unlikely that there will be any real significant increases in public spending on housing, health, education, social services, at least until 1980 - and that would only help to restore services which are now being cut savagely. The reality is that further massive cuts will be demanded irrespective of whether it is a Labour or Tory Government.

The attack on council housing will continue and the expected changes in the finance of housing will only lead to further expansion of private housing. All this will be at the expense of council housing where virtually nothing will be pro-

## THE LAST 5 YEARS

posed to deal with tenants rights and the massive backlog of repairs and improvements - unless, of course, as bait to try to get yet more large rent increases accepted.

The 'rediscovery' of the inner city crisis will continue to provide consultants and academics with yet more jobs while the Government 'redistributes' money from one working class area to another. It seems clear that there will be no extra money and the 'solutions' offered will simply avoid tackling the real causes - while industrialists and the multi-national companies laugh all the way to the bank.

The failure of the improvement programme coupled with the cuts in new council housebuilding can only mean a return to the 1960's picture of blight, dereliction and human misery and the slow death of large areas.

## Part of a Wider Struggle

The vast majority of demands of working class families can only be achieved as a result of the struggle of the labour movement as a whole. Without that organisation and action working class families would only get what the state and capitalists felt to be the minimum necessary to maintain order and the existing economic system. Organisation and action is also needed to defend gains made and to educate and develop political understanding of the socialist alternatives. The system cannot finally be changed without the working class gaining control over the production and use of wealth.

## Why it is important

Community action struggles have an important role to play although by themselves they offer no direct threat to production. They give a different perspective and give opportunities to be involved in organisations and campaigns outside of those of the workplace, which are mainly concerned with pay and conditions and are male-dominated. It is important to build organisations based around the home, around specific issues, eg. health and education services, and the needs of particular groups of people, eg. pensioners' action groups.

The last 5 years have shown that militancy within the trade union movement and in community action tend to rise and fall together, for the same reasons. In 1971-72 the trade union movement was fighting the Industrial Relations Bill while tenants were fighting the Housing Finance Act. Obviously both were part of the same attack but was the timing simply a coincidence? Since the social contrick was devised and despite the cuts in public spending there has been much less rank and file activity than in 1971-72. Similarly the level of activity in community action has decl-

ined. In the last 6 months there has been an upsurge in activity, particularly by the public sector unions against the cuts and loss of jobs, and more recently the demand for a return to free collective bargaining.

## THE KEY ISSUES

Because it is part of a wider struggle and drawing on the lessons of the last 5 years, it is important that community action struggles:-

- build effective organisations
- make demands and take action
- develop an understanding of how national policies and economic forces affect the local areas
- push out propaganda
- work with and get the support of other organisations in the labour movement
- avoid losing their independence to do all these things

These are not options, they all have to be an essential part of all community action struggles. Groups and activists have too often seen demands for, for example, housing action areas, as ends in themselves. They have also often failed to develop a political perspective to use the policies put forward by the state in terms of their tactical use and to prevent being sucked into the system.

It is no use tenants and action groups waiting for things to get better. Nor can they successfully operate in isolation, even to preserve existing policies and services, against the forces of interests lined up in favour of the cuts. The cuts have to be fought. So do the rent increases and the deteriorating conditions on estates. So do the lack of jobs and adequate services.

How these issues are tackled is the crucial question. Even if all campaigns have the essential ingredients outlined above, this will not be enough. The cuts, rents, lack of jobs, etc. cannot be tackled one by one. Local campaigns which often start off around one issue, eg a rent increase, have to be broadened out to cover for example lack of repairs, jobs in Direct Works departments, the way council housing is financed and to actively support cuts campaigns. Likewise how can campaigns started by activists and politically-aware tenants broaden their base and increase their political strength?

We obviously cannot prescribe how all this can be done in this short article. Nor do we have all the answers.

The state and business interests play one worker off against another, one tenant off against another, and so on. Only by united action by tenants and rank-and-file trade unionists and organisations of the labour movement can working class living standards be defended and any real gains achieved.

# ACTION ROUND-UP

## National Empty Homes Campaign

A Conference for action on empty homes on 26 February drew 80 representatives from housing action groups, mainly in London. The Conference launched a national campaign. A steering group was formed to organise publicity and put pressure on the Government.

The policy proposals agreed by the Conference included the reintroduction of requisitioning powers, the obligation for local authorities to publish annual lists of empty properties with owners, the immediate introduction of the Homelessness Bill and the reversal of all housing cuts.



Workshops explored issues such as legal action against councils, reduced public sector inefficiency, and the importance of empty homes campaigns opposing the Criminal Trespass Law.

One group discussing licensed squatting schemes, recommended setting up a coordinating body to circulate information and

act as a pressure group on behalf of self-help schemes collectively. This will be one of the first tasks of the Steering Group. The Conference also agreed on the Another Empty Home poster as the campaign symbol.

### Report available

A report of the Conference contains summaries of the workshops' conclusions, the policy proposals agreed by the Conference, proposed future action, names of elected Steering Group, and list of those who attended. Copies from Westminster Empty Properties Action Committee, 3 Croxley Rd, London W9 (01-969 1427) 15p.

### CLORIUS CAMPAIGN GROWS

The National Heat Metering Action Campaign - under the slogan "Clorius Out Now" - has now held its third meeting of representatives of tenants associations from all over the country.

The Campaign is made up of tenants organisations with Clorius "meters" installed in their homes and linked to a district heating scheme (see CA 29, p.34 for more info on the campaign).

At the meeting the tenants agreed to ask for a meeting with Arthur Palmer MP (Chairperson, Parliamentary Energy Committee) to put the consumer's case at a district heating conference on March 22nd, to

## TENANTS

### THAT'S WHAT GET RESULTS

LIFTS in Bristol's multi-storey blocks of council flats are to be improved or replaced in a rolling programme announced last month, which will continue till 1995. Worth noting is the fact that the only lifts to have been "dealt with" already are 2 in Glendale House and 2 in Barton House, both on the Barton Hill estate, where tenants had the gumption last year to get organised over their complaints. Those people in blocks due for replacement in 1995 please note.

(thanks to Bristol Voice)

be dominated by the big manufacturers of district heating anxious to flog their wares to the local authority and government representatives attending.

The next meeting of the campaign will be in Rochdale on Saturday 23 April, to which all tenants organisations campaigning against Clorius are invited. Further details from Chris Johnson, MARC, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. (061-236 1117)

### TENANTS MEET WORKERS

The Wandsworth Federation of Tenants Associations recently met with representatives from the Wandsworth Council manual workers joint shop stewards committee to discuss common problems. Information was exchanged and it was realised that there was more in common than was dividing them. It is hoped to have further meetings.

# ADVICE FOR FREE

## setting up an advice centre

\*\*\*\*\*  
ACTION NOTES  
no. 8  
\*\*\*\*\*

The last few years have seen a rapid growth in the number of centres set up for giving free advice. Some of these, like the traditional Citizens Advice Bureaux and local authority-run housing aid and information centres, often restrict themselves to advise only and insist on being open to all eg. landlords as well as tenants, while others are community based and besides giving advice are involved in local issues. There is also an increasing number of Neighbourhood Law Centres and legal advice sessions run at other centres. These notes are not a guide for setting up such a centre. Instead they are aimed at tenants/residents associations and action groups who want to or are already involved in giving advice to their members or local people in general.

## ADVICE OR ACTION

Though these notes are about organising for giving advice one thing will have to be decided early on. How far is your group prepared to turn advice into action? How are you going to tackle the wider issues and get at the root cause of "individual" problems? If the same problems keep cropping up is there any way you can organise to deal with them collectively?

\* A number of tenants in the same block of flats or a particular area may have repairing problems - pressure can be put on the landlord by forming into a tenants association or running a co-ordinated campaign eg. pressurising the local authority into using their powers under the Public Health Acts.

\* If there are continuing complaints about vandals, what facilities are there for kids in the area - a campaign for better facilities might be the answer.

Solving an individual's problem may give satisfaction - but how many individuals can you deal with? Collective action will have a far greater effect than simply dishing up advice as if you were running a soup kitchen!

## WHAT KIND OF ADVICE

The first thing to decide is what can be offered. There is a variety of ways of getting advice across but how this is done will depend on the kinds of problems you aim to deal with and the resources available.

### Advice on what?

You must establish whether you want to give advice on all problems or whether you're going to concentrate on certain crucial areas eg. tenants rights/welfare benefits. But be prepared for anything. If you are going to limit yourselves, how will you deal with problems outside your scope?

### Referrals

If you aren't able to give advice yourselves on all problems, a bit of research will give you a list of organisations that can. Find out the problems you're likely to come across, then search out the places and people with the answers. These can always be included in a news-sheet if you put out general information this way but you must have them available. Remember it's always best to know someone by name you can refer people to. This applies to any agencies you're in regular contact with eg. Rent Tribunals, Rent Officers, Council Departments etc.. Make a point in contacting all these agencies in person to let them know who you are and what you are doing.

### Helpers

You may be a small group but it is important to involve as far as possible your members and people locally in organising and giving advice. The service is then run collectively. Not everybody will want to give advice, but there will be other things to do, especially in running any campaign eg. street surveys, gathering information, publicity, etc., or when it comes to raising funds such as organising jumble sales.

# HOW TO ORGANISE



## Where

If you're setting up an advice centre it will have to have a base. The ideal would be somewhere that is easily recognisable like a shop front with an attractive window that can be used to publicise your campaigns and the help you can offer.

\* Find out if its possible to share the facilities of other groups eg. community centres, play-groups or perhaps an underused church hall.

\* Search out the possibility of short-life property. Councils can be persuaded but you will have to organise to put a case to them. You will have to establish that there's a need for the kind of services you're planning so gather as much support and evidence as you can eg. petitions from local people, support from local Councillors, trade unions, instances of bad repairs, harassment by landlords, speculations and evictions etc.. But there are alternatives to a shop, depending on the kind of service you're planning to give.

## Opening hours

How often you are open will depend on the availability of your base and the number of volunteers. An ever-open door may seem attractive but never over-estimate your resources. If you are trying to deal with individual problems you are going to have to do a lot of follow-up work. Time must be allowed for this plus the other jobs that will need doing eg. administration, training, volunteers, besides the taking up of the wider issues. If you overstretch yourselves you will only end up giving a bad service.

Once you have decided on your opening hours stick to them - people will soon be put off if they turn up and find no one around. If you do have to change make sure the new times are well publicised.

## Finance

How much you need will depend on your ambitions. Work out a rough budget of your probable running costs - electricity, gas, rent, postage, paper, etc. A phone is likely to be your most expensive item. Be strict about its use for your own sakes. A donation box could always be put next to it. If you are going to raise funds make someone responsible for searching out the options. Grants can be got from the local council (though not easily and they may want to impose conditions).

There are registered charities (check your library for local and national charities - Directory of Grant Making Trusts has details), and local businesses and traders can often be persuaded to part with cash or goods such as stationery, furniture etc. If you are appealing for money get a leaflet together showing the aims and objectives of your group, who you are trying to help to show around and leave with people. You must keep records of any monies received and spent. Appoint someone as treasurer to keep records on a regular basis.

## Volunteers/Training

Somebody must make sure everyone involved in running the sessions or helping out knows where things are and how any systems operate. Regular weekly meetings to discuss what issues have come up in the advice 'sessions', running problems and the work of the project are a must. Besides these, make sure time is set aside for "training" new workers and for bringing up to date everybody giving advice.

Laws, rules, regulations etc. are always changing. Get any friendly 'specialists' eg. lawyers, environmental health officers, planners to hold regular training sessions, and approach the local WEA, Polytechnic etc to see if they will run courses in citizens' rights for example, in conjunction with local community groups.



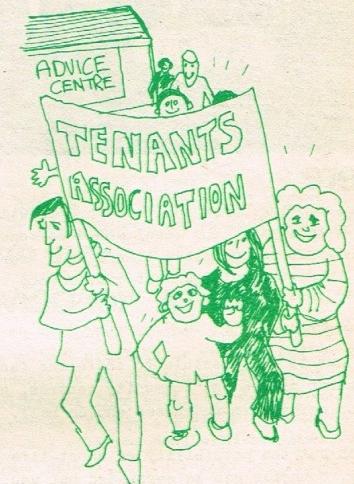
## Further action

Advice may be enough in many cases but what if further help is needed, eg. representing someone at a rent or supplementary benefits appeal tribunal. Are you going to organise so that you will go, and if not who will? One possibility may be in finding local people who've represented themselves at a tribunal and persuading them to go along with their neighbours as "friends" to explain procedures and give encouragement. Eventually you might find yourselves with a list of people experienced and willing to do this.

\* A stall in the local market place may be enough to start publicising a campaign. If a regular advice session is planned work out the space you're going to need not only for seeing people (plus those waiting) but also for keeping records, papers, a work area for typing, etc..

\* Some people may not want to discuss their problems in the open so how are you going to cater for privacy?

\* If you're going to cover a rural area or one that is widespread, how about a mobile service? (See Information and Action Services for Rural Areas, £1.20 from Dilys Page, Dept. of Social Admin., University of York, Hesslington, York).



## Specialist volunteers

You may want to enlist specialists to give help in the sessions. But first work out just how you are going to use them. If you are content to leave it to the specialists, so be it - but it could be that neither you nor the person you're trying to help will benefit or learn from the experience - besides which specialists will often overlook the wider tactical issue and see the problem only in their terms. One possibility may be to link up with the specialists - if you're trying to deal with an employment problem it might be usefully discussed between the "client", the advisor, a volunteer lawyer and a local trade union a collective solution reached. Beware of specialists who are simply using you to drum up extra work for themselves! Even if you decide against using specialists in sessions it may be worth cultivating some you can turn to for instant advice, eg. by telephoning through with your query. As for getting hold of specialists, you might already know some friendly ones - but lawyers usually can't volunteer without first getting permission from the Law Society. If you don't know any specialists personally find out who the secretary is for eg. the local Law Society and make your approach through them for volunteers.

## RUNNING THE ADVICE SERVICE

So far we've raised points to be decided before you start or shortly afterwards. But what about the actual running of an advice service?

**ROTAS** Someone must be available at the times you say you are open. Work out a rota as far ahead as possible and get people to say definitely when they will be available.

**LEARNING** You may not have any experience to begin with but the only way to learn is by doing it. Don't be afraid to ask questions - even if you may seem ignorant to begin with.

**RECORDS** How sophisticated these are depends on you but some kind of record keeping is essential. A 'day book' can be used to record people who call or telephone for advice, who dealt with them, what kind of problem it was and if any further action is being taken. If you are following

up a query, design a record sheet or card for filing to show what has been done. This is essential if a number of people are involved in running the sessions and to cover cases of sickness etc. Records will also help as evidence of the work of the sessions when trying to raise cash/support etc.

**FORMS/LEAFLETS** If you are going to give help apart from advice get a collection of necessary forms together such as applications to rent tribunals/ rent officers, for rent/rates' rebates, industrial tribunals etc. plus standardised letters for such things as appeals against social-security decisions etc. Any leaflets available eg. DHSS pamphlets etc. can be used as a display so people can pick them out themselves - but make sure they are up to date.

**USEFUL ADDRESSES** Apart from referral lists keep a list/index of useful addresses and telephone numbers of people and organisations, from the local DHSS office through to the nearest chiropodist. Then anyone, including the person you're advising, can make the necessary phone call. Work out who's who in the various council departments and what each of the departments are responsible for.

**OTHER AGENCIES** Make sure you know how efficiently other agencies in your area operate, especially if you're making referrals to them. Try to follow up referrals to see if the person referred got satisfaction - if not you could soon get a name for being of no help.

**APPROACH** Giving advice may seem enough but the person you're helping should be getting more

than just advice. By taking on their problem you may be helping the individual but if you take it over completely you may be depriving them of learning through making demands on the system. You may also find yourself becoming just like any other institution. Always involve the person you're helping, explain what you're doing and why and support him/her in taking action and initiatives as far as possible. Above all, make sure (s)he's aware of the real reasons for the problem.

## CONCLUSION

The essential thing is to learn from the problems you're trying to deal with. The key move is from simply offering an advice service to increasing the active involvement of your members and local residents. The service should become a base for building up community organisation and not be simply static. You must work out the relationship between individual case work and the wider issues, using your case work as the springboard for local campaigns and "test cases" to attract publicity to an issue affecting the whole area.

With limited resources you will achieve a greater impact this way than simply confining yourselves to advice - though, of course, individual problems will always be important. You must therefore decide what priority you're going to give to the various problems you're trying to deal with. Finally, talk to as many groups as possible who've attempted the same thing - you might learn from their experience.

## USEFUL INFO....

Free leaflets: contact your local D.H.S.S. and Employment offices for a range of Leaflets on N.I. and supplementary benefits and employee's rights. You can get on the mailing list for new and updated D.H.S.S. leaflets and if there are difficulties with the local office get bulk orders:-

Mailing List: Information Division, Room D515, Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1  
Bulk Orders: Mr. Hogan, Leaflet Unit, Block 2, Government Buildings, Canons Park, Honey Pot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AY.

Dept. of Employment: For bulk orders Information Room, 12 St. James Square, London SW1.

Dept. of Environment: Produce free leaflets on Rents, Land Compensation and Planning procedures. For bulk orders write to Publicity Storage, Building 3, Victoria Road, South Ruislip, Middlesex.

Local Law Society: for free referral list of local legal aid solicitors showing different kinds of work they do. If there are difficulties write to The Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2.

Public Health Advisory Service: Care House, Bigland St, London E1 (01-790-4507). Directory of Volunteer Environmental Health Officers plus practice notes on Public Health/Housing law and newsletter.

Shelter London Housing Aid Centre: 189a Old Brompton Road, London, SW10 (01-373-7267). Advice on housing plus useful publications on tenant's rights.

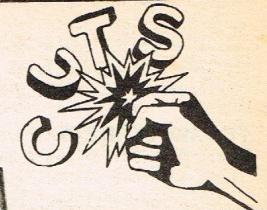
Child Poverty Action Group: 1 Macklin St, London WC2 (01-242-3225). Produce excellent series of booklets for advisors on welfare benefits plus regular bulletin.

Citizens Rights Office: (same address as for C.P.A.G.) for advice/representation on S.S. problems. Claimants Union: addresses of local CUs and pamphlets Claimants Library, 19 Carlyle Rd, Birm. 16.

National Women's Aid Federation: 51 Chalcot Road, London, NW1 (01-586-0104). Advisory Service for Squatters: 2 St. Pauls Road, London N1 for help on squatting issues.

MIND (National Assoc. for Mental Health): 22 Harley St, London W1 (01-637-0741) and Northern Bookshop 157 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 3EF. Advice/representation/publications.

# CUTS National and local action



ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE the trade union movement into the public service unions - said to be "directly affected by the cuts" - and the rest, are being fought by the National Steering Committee made up of 10 (mainly public service) unions to fight the cuts.

## OTHER UNIONS APPROACHED

The Committee has written to all the 111 TUC-affiliated unions asking them to send delegates to a national conference in London on March 22nd. The Conference is to draw together public and manufacturing sector unions to discuss the attacks made on the 'social wage' by the massive cuts in public spending.

## CUTS AFFECT ALL

According to Reg Race (Secretary of the Steering Committee), they are receiving every day more and more examples of the effects on the manufacturing sector of the cuts in council and government building programmes.

\* In one concrete pipe manufacturing firm, management is threatening to lay off 12,000 workers as a direct result of the cuts in public building programmes.

\* Nottingham City Council has cancelled its whole 1977 order to British Leyland for new buses - because of the cuts in government transport grants.

\* Skilled miners in the Welsh coalfields are unable to work because of injuries that require hospital treatment. The cuts have lengthened waiting lists for that treatment to years.



30 May - 3 June: Week of Action, South West Region (area from Cornwall to London).

Early June: South East Region Day of Action.

## DAYs OF ACTION

Since the beginning of December, the public service unions have organised Days of Action in the West Midlands (see last issue of CA), Wales (more than 1,000 people, including S.Wales miners, marched against the cuts on 26 Feb.), and in Scotland, Yorkshire and Humberside demonstrations and industrial action are to take place on 9 March (after we go to press).

## Future action

2 & 30 April: North West Region (Merseyside, Manchester, Lancs) - two conferences to be held.

20 April: Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear - to include strike action.

25 April - 1 May: Week of Action in Lincoln, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester & Northamptonshire.

11 May: London - one-day stoppages and national demonstration.

While the mix of unions involved in each area will be different, the main purpose of these actions is to build unity amongst all those affected by the cuts - not just by a direct threat to their jobs, but by an erosion of the public services for which the working class has fought so hard for so long.

## CONTACT:

Further information about the national conference and local action organised by the public service unions can be obtained from Reg Race, Secretary, National Steering Committee, NUPE, Civic House, Aberdeen Terrace, London SE3. (01-852 2842) or from local/regional NUPE, NALGO, COHSE, etc, union secretaries.

# WANDSWORTH WEAKENS

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL HAVE held out against the cuts longer than most councils. They've resisted demands by central government to make cuts and they have tried to aim for a growth rate of at least 8%. However, over the last year 'economies' were still being made and it was made clear that some cuts were on their way.

## £18m in interest charges

At the beginning of the year 'Pavement' (Wandsworth's community newspaper) showed that Wandsworth paid £18m in interest repayments, ie a third of all council expenditure went to the financiers. As a result Pavement wrote, "'A New Year message' to our Labour councillors", which was: 'No cuts in existing or programmed services! Not a penny on the rents! Tie rent increases strictly to inflation. If someone has to suffer make it the moneylenders! Boycott interest repayments! This is called sticking your neck out and putting two fingers up at the system and the money that runs it. They did it in Clay Cross a couple of years ago - it's what is needed in Wandsworth now!'

## Message ignored

Needless to say, the message went unheeded. In a letter to Pavement, Chris Purnell, Labour councillor for Fairfield ward detailed the cuts and the rates increase: "The services affected are given below, together with the amount of the cut recommended at the Labour Group meeting on 21st January.

Service	Amount of cut
Housing	£181,000
Planning	-
Personnel	£173,250
Public Services	£117,460
Recreation	£ 48,360
Social Services	£428,540

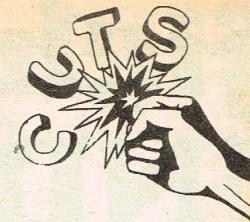
".... in consequence of these cuts the average weekly rate rise is likely to be about 58p instead of about 74p!"

### Rate rise

This means that almost £1m has been cut from the running costs of these services and rates are to rise 26%, and the planned growth rate cut from 9.5% to 6.6% (6.6% might be good in comparison with other councils' records of no growth but still nowhere near adequate to meet inflation and increasing needs).

### No solution

The Labour left in Wandsworth was in fact against the cuts, but what was their solution? To increase the rates by 55% instead of 26%, on the strength that it affects the middle classes the most. But it still leaves that vast sum of £18m untouched. It would still mean a cut in the standard of living of everyone



who pays rates. And it provides no long-term solution — what happens when the government cuts again? Will the push be for yet another rates rise? So much for Wandsworth 'doing a Clay Cross'!

### London Transport Jubilee Special

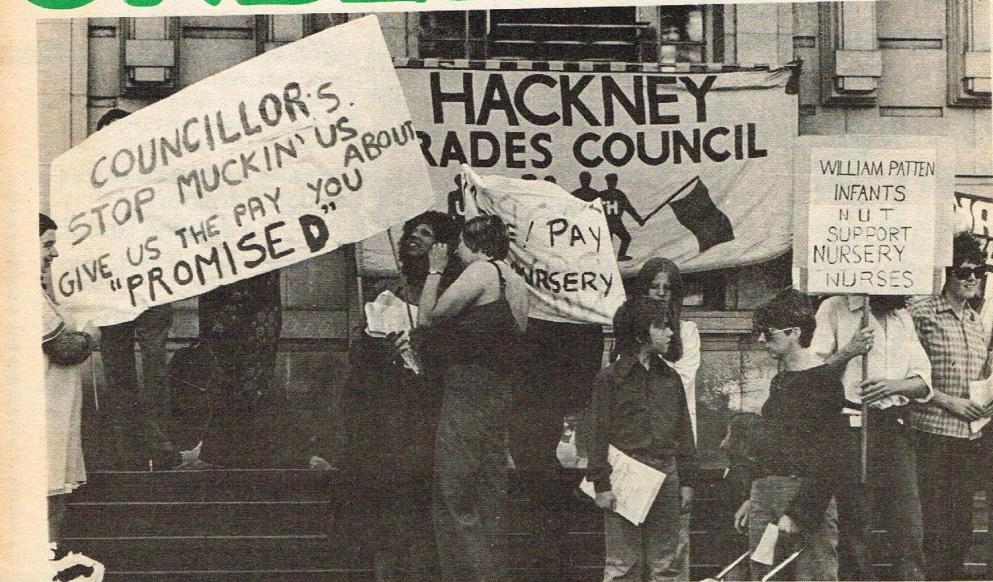
Carpets made of 100% pure wool and coloured in red, black and silver grey, are to be laid down the centre aisle of the upper and lower deck of 25 buses.

This concession by LT to the needs of those comrades who can't afford shoes is only to apply to 'some central routes' between Easter Monday and November 5th 1977. Then, when the tourists have all gone home, we can get back to our Silver Jubilee bicycles, folks! London Free Press



A JOINT CAMPAIGN by 5 transport unions and passenger organisations to save public transport in London was launched in November under the slogan "Save our Services". A 'Public Transport Day' is being organised for 21st April - details and campaign badges, posters, briefing documents, leaflets etc. available from Save Public Transport Campaign, Greater London House, Hampstead Rd. London NW1 (01 387 0116)

# fighting FOR UNDER-FIVES



## Part 2. Campaigning for full provision

For years now governments, educationalists and trade unions have admitted the need for and benefits of nursery facilities for children under five. In fact, however, the development of this provision has largely depended on 'voluntary' organisations. Women at work haven't been organised enough to force full state nursery provision, and women and single parents at home are isolated.

### Hit by the cuts

Now even those meagre nursery facilities provided are being drastically reduced by the cuts. The new building budget for nursery education is to be cut from £31.9 million in 1975/6 to £6 million in 1979/80 and the government expects no increase in the number of under-5s in school after 1976/7. On top of those cuts, councils are closing down or reducing facilities as part of their local cuts package.

Councils round the country are openly looking for cheap alternatives both to their existing council nursery provision and to the facilities they should provide. They are encouraging playgroups run by voluntary organisations to extend their

hours and provide an all-day service for working parents, while at the same time they are clamping down on, and cutting back on grants to, part-time play groups. Child minders, who at the moment set their own charges to parents, are also seen by councils as a cheap alternative - no need for buildings, wages, equipment, etc.

Campaigns for full nursery provision are being run all over the country. From the experiences of those involved, we have put together the following notes on how to run campaigns and who should be involved in them.

### Who should be involved

It is vital that campaigns for nursery facilities make links across the Labour Movement, women's groups, tenants' groups, and voluntary playgroup organisations.

**I** Some campaigns dismiss voluntary sector facilities as distractions from the real issues and cheap let-outs for councils. Whilst these projects exist, though, they are being hit by cuts like everyone else and by including them in a wider campaign it is possible to resist council

efforts to exploit them and get provision on the cheap. They can be brought together and can draw up sets of demands and monitor cuts which local authorities are trying to slip by unnoticed.

**2 Trade Unions** are beginning to be involved more actively in the nursery issue for several reasons. Members of NUPE and NALGO, official staff in local authority nurseries, feel threatened by 'voluntary' staff undercutting their wages and 'voluntary' projects undermining official nurseries because of their low costs. The TUC has a working party on Under-5s now and it has written to every Trades Council asking for information on under-5 provision locally.

Local factories or the Trades Council may be approached by the local authority about setting up factory nurseries. Most trade unions and trades councils fob off issues like nurseries to a women's sub-committee, while they get on with the 'real work'. You must work at preventing this, and make sure that a suggestion like factory nurseries doesn't get slipped through. There are serious dangers connected with nurseries tied to your job, especially if you work in the private sector as opposed to working for, say, a council or health authority. Factory nurseries can become like tied cottages are for agricultural workers - women will be tied to a job with a nursery and will have to accept the employers standards of wages and nursery conditions.

**3 Tenants' groups** should be concerned with the state of nursery provision in their area. We described in the last issue the isolation felt by many parents stuck in flats with children and the strain of living in blighted areas or places with no playspace or playgrounds. Apart from these factors there are strong economic pressures on women who haven't worked before to do so now. Nurseries are an essential community facility. Local campaigns protesting at the closure of a local nursery have been quite successful, but it's often only women who take the issue up. A closed nursery or poor under-5 facilities affect everyone in a community.

**4 Women's groups** like the Working Women's Charter Campaign fight for full-time nursery provision for all as a basic demand.

## HOW TO CAMPAIGN

If you are starting off small and without a firm local base yet, it is best to look for one aspect of the nursery issue, through which you can make contacts, get publicity and attract helpers. It shouldn't be hard to find one - there will be cuts locally, the waiting list for nurseries may be gigantic or the local 'voluntary' project may be being asked to do more with less. Aim to draw in all the groups mentioned above - they're all affected and should all be part of the campaign.

You'll need some good counter-arguments to the anti-nursery lobby, and the "well of course we'd

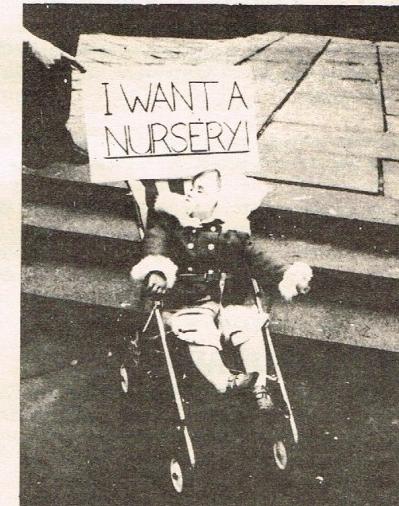
all like ... but ... present economic climate" lobby. Your first publicity may just be letters in the paper or handouts in the street. Sooner or later you will be facing people who answer back though. Prepare well:

### How to collect information

You'll need to be armed with information about the situation nationally and locally, past promises, shelved plans, cuts in building programmes, the number of under-5s locally, comparative figures for your area and other parts of the country and so on.

(see box on page 27)

Belfield Community Council in Rochdale and the East Newcastle Action Group have both done surveys of parents in parts of their towns - asking what sort of provision they had for under-5s, whether mothers worked or would work if there were nursery provision, what they did with children, if they already went to work, and what sort of provision they would like to see. These questions provide good ammunition against the still-strong "women should/want to stay at home" lobby. Both surveys showed a high demand for adequate provision, a large number of women finding alternative, but not necessarily suitable provision and a high level of awareness of the benefits to children of nursery education. Write to Belfield Community Council, Belfield Community School, Samson Street, Rochdale for a copy of their report.



Hackney Under-5s produce a fantastic newspaper every year, crammed with statistics, comparisons, and accounts of local action on nurseries. It sells throughout the country as a 'model' campaigning paper. They go a stage further and look for research projects which they think the DHSS or local authority should be doing. For example, Hackney has the 2nd largest number of children taken into care in London. How much more does that cost than proper under-5 facilities would

cost? What are the links between lack of nursery facilities and numbers of children in care?

## Taking action

Get support by writing letters - to papers, unions, trades councils, cuts committees, tenants' groups, staff, parents. Petitioning in the street spreads the word. Lobbying the council is vital.

Newcastle Nursery Action Group did a street theatre play on lack of nurseries and insisted on doing it for councillors after a march to the civic centre. That was supported by the local cuts committee. Brent and Islington nursery campaigns are hardened lobbyists. Hackney Under-5s organised a demonstration in support of nursery nurses in a dispute.

The North Tyneside nursery campaign sent a questionnaire to every candidate in the local elections asking them to declare their position and intentions on nursery provision for publication in the local paper.

## Combined action needed

A strong battle put up by parents and unions in Buckinghamshire in the last few weeks has forced the County Council to withdraw its plans to close all its council nurseries and hand them over to be privately run. Strikes and demonstrations led to them deciding to transfer £60,000 from maintenance of school buildings back to nurseries. Whilst a victory for the nursery campaign, this emphasises the need for combined action on the cuts - so that one group isn't directly hitting at another group.

The problems over unionisation of all nursery workers - local authority and 'voluntary' workers - undercutting of official nurseries by community projects, etc. are being tackled in some places. The London Nursery Campaign has held an Inter-Union workshop on these issues. The need for joint-shop steward committees representing under-5 workers is being talked of. The unions have to be tackled on these things.

## Making demands

Once you've got a core of people involved you can work on sets of demands for the campaign as a whole and also draw together different factions by discussing demands for special groups.

Childminders, for example, are in danger of being seen as the ideal solution by all and sundry. The TUC and the Labour Party are looking to childminders as the only cheap solution available and many local authorities are putting this into practice. Lambeth Council has experimented with paying childminders a salary and supporting them properly. They have found that it's just as expensive to do this as to set up other forms of provision. So don't let your childminders be treated as a cheap alternative.

\* A salary for childminders with proper back-up, information and equipment.

Playgroups are being asked to take on more running costs themselves, although they usually raise money, do administration and run the group already.

\* Full council funding for playgroups - to cover wages, premises, equipment, back-up services.

\* Extra staff and money for playgroups extending their hours to open all day.

It is also important to consider the whole issue of community control of play groups and the demand demands linked to this.

It's important that demands are adopted by all the 'voluntary' projects to present a united front to moves from the council to make cuts. In the short term, if they are on council grants:

\* Demand equal and adequate funding for each project of a kind eg. all extended play groups.

To prevent threats to union nursery workers, 'voluntary' workers must talk with unions about becoming members.

\* No undercutting of local authority nursery staff wages

which means you can demand:

\* Equal pay for all under-5s workers in local authority projects and community projects.

\* Equal training for all under-5s workers.

Work with nursery staff and unions to demand

\* No closures of any under-5s facilities:

A campaign like Hackney Under 5s can give you information about organisations set up by the specialised groups - childminders, extended playgroups, community nurseries - to draw up common demands.

The overall demand which is adopted as a basic one by several campaigns is:

\* Nursery places for all children under 5 with a choice for parents on the number of hours their kids attend.



The London Nursery Campaign are putting forward the demand for Integrated Child-Care Centres where different sorts of provision exist in one building - playgroups for short sessions, teachers for kids there all day, nursery nurses for babies and very young kids.

It's easy to lose sight of this seemingly impossible demand if you're getting somewhere with

other demands. Other you get invited along to 'work out ways of achieving something' with the council, if you're noisy and informed enough. Don't let them bog you down with detail about their problems so that you begin to think in terms of savings, squeezes, five places here and a social worker for the childminders there.

## NURSERY CAMPAIGN ADDRESSES ON p 39

# HOW TO COLLECT INFORMATION

There are three main local sources of information about under fives. These are the Reference Dept. of the local public library, the Social Services Department, and the Education Offices.

## How many under fives?

The most up-to-date estimate for your area should be in the Registrar General's Annual Report. Local reference libraries are usually very helpful and will tell you which is the latest report for your area. Whether the Registrar General's Report is the most accurate estimate will depend on two potentially distorting factors:-  
• the registration of births outside the area because of the location of maternity hospitals;  
• the movement of young children into the area for housing reasons - new estates and/or access to private rented accommodation.

For these reasons the estimate is more likely to be an under-estimate than an over-estimate.

The Registrar General will also give a yearly report on the number of illegitimate births registered in every year - this is an important indicator of the number of single parent families.

The 1971 Census Report may give a useful comparison with the Registrar General's estimate for the same year. (But watch out for the under-reporting of children in multi-occupied housing.) The Census Report is useful for giving the geographical distribution of under-fives between different Ward areas - which you can later compare with the geographical distribution of provision. (See the SCAT pamphlet "How to Use the Census" price 9p from 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1)

A third source of information on under fives population is the local authority's Health Visitors' Records. Whether this third source is available depends on (a) whether the Social Services Department actually puts the figures together, and (b) whether they are willing to let you have them. BUT these will also have various inaccuracies depending on local circumstances (which a friendly member of Social Services could explain).

## How many places & what kind?

There are two main local departments involved

in providing facilities for under fives:

- 1 the Social Services Department
- 2 the Local Education Authority.

You may be able to get the information you want by going to the Social Services or Education Offices. But they may not be very co-operative in which case you should start in the Reference Library.

In the library you will be able to find the Minutes and Reports of the Social Services Committee and of the Education Committee. Failing this, or for additional information, you should write to the two departments. They should have the information and it should be publicly available.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICES PROVISION FOR UNDER FIVES IS:-

- The number of full time places in a) local authority Day Nurseries, b) Community or Voluntary Day Nurseries, c) with Registered Childminders.
- The number of part time places a) in PlayGroups b) with Registered Childminders, c) any other day provision.
- The number of children on the Day Nursery Waiting List, and the conditions for accepting them onto the list.
- The Future Plans for under fives provision by the Social Services Department in relation to all types of provision mentioned above and in relation to liaison with the Education Service.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EDUCATION SERVICE PROVISION FOR UNDER FIVES IS :-

- The number of full time places in Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes (not including children under five admitted to ordinary infant classes).
- The number of half-time places in Nursery Schools and Classes.
- The number of children in ordinary infant classes who are not yet five. (This information is recorded every January for the Department of Education and Science.)
- Future plans for Nursery Education, full-time and part-time.

NEXT ISSUE - How to get information on the numbers of working mothers and single parent families.

# INNER CITIES REDISCOV



OFFICIAL

Over the last year the inner city has reemerged as a fashionable topic for the media and political establishment. Peter Shore has been stumping the country telling people that "if our cities fail, so also does our society". The Sunday Times has run a campaign to "Stop Britain's cities rotting at the core", climaxing last month in an expensive conference in Bristol entitled "SAVE OUR CITIES". An inner city interdepartmental Whitehall committee has been set up, promising "radical initiatives" sometime this Spring. These will be based on the Department of the Environment's recently published Inner Area Studies of Birmingham, Liverpool and London.

## Political Sops

This new flurry of official activity is firmly put in its place by the Community Development Project's new reports - "The Costs of Industrial Change" and "Gilding the Ghetto". Both clearly demonstrate that successive governments have refused to confront the economic root causes of the inner city's decline. Consequently government projects over the past decade to abolish poverty have been at best political sops to cover up continuing poverty, and at all times attempts to control dissent in working class communities.

These two approaches to the inner city - the establishment's plans for tinkering with the administrative machinery, and the demands for public control over the process of industrial investment - are worth comparing. We can see clearly that the government's springtime inner city initiative can be nothing more than yet another irrelevant programme which only nibbles at the edges of the problem.

## The Root Causes

CDP's "THE COSTS OF INDUSTRIAL CHANGE" argues that the inner city "problem" is not a special or localised one. Areas of decline (of which the

inner city is the only worst) are an inevitable consequence of industrial change under capitalism.

## Growth....

How does this happen? Historically firms have located new plant on green field sites, expanded their production and drawn in a new population (often from older areas of decline). Once all the available land is filled up there is a period of maturity as profits and employment stabilise. A settled community, with relatively good pay and housing, is established. Meanwhile, a new generation of industrial investment is laid down elsewhere - on green field sites. Profits then decline in the older area as the technology becomes outdated and there is little new investment in existing plant. Firms begin to close down and sites are left vacant. Skilled jobs in particular begin to decline. Local peoples' income falls and their housing deteriorates as they become less able to afford repairs or improvements.

## ....and Decline

This analysis of growth and decline applies as much to the post-war new towns and suburban developments as it does to the old inner city areas. Indeed in some places, these newer areas are already on the decline. Coventry - an expanding area in the '50s - now has many "inner city" symptoms as the car industry has contracted. Skelmersdale - a new town of the '60s, based on modern technologies like manufacture of TV tubes - shows that modern industry is just as susceptible to decline. The new towns of today will be tomorrow's "inner cities".

This analysis differs fundamentally from the 'official' approach because:

\* It links the inner city problem to economic decline;

- \* It links the inner city problem to economic changes in society as a whole;
- \* It takes as a starting point the patterns of industrial investment in an area. These are at the root of the growth and decline of communities;
- \* It treats decline in community services and in the job market as aspects of one process.

## Official Solutions

CDP's "GILDING THE GHETTO" shows that various government poverty programmes have very different starting points.

These government programmes:

- \* Define areas of deprivation and treat them as a local problem largely separate from the rest of society;
- \* Regard the people within these areas as being part of the problem, often defining them as "inadequate";
- \* Regard shortcomings in particular local authority services as a major cause of deprivation - e.g. education, housing, social services and so on.

## SAVE OUR CITIES

Cream of Asparagus Soup

Smoked Salmon

Roast Duck

Red Cherry Sauce      Green Peas  
Croquette Potatoes      Brussel Sprouts

Apricot Mousse

Cheese and Biscuits

Coffee

Blanc Fumé de Pouilly 1975

Pommard 1973

## A Better Bureaucracy?

Because of these starting points, Government policy - from Education Priority Areas and the Urban Programme of the '60s to the recently launched Comprehensive Community Programmes - have concentrated on improved delivery of services, aimed at defined areas of special need. There has been no attempt to tackle or even to study the way private industry (and in some cases the "public" nationalised industries) can withdraw their investment in an area with little regard to the social costs of their actions. Instead the emphasis has been on refining the administrative machinery, better coordination of services, better management of resources, and so on.

Menu from Bristol Conference 1977.

## Economic Bribes

Much of the FINAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT-COMMISSIONED INNER AREA STUDIES conforms to this approach - despite its greater emphasis on the inner city's economic dimension. Liverpool's study, for example, calls for an economic development programme while Birmingham's recognises that economic problems are "at the centre of the problem" and can be solved only by intervention. Lambeth's, too, says "Job opportunities are fundamental". But despite these references, the underlying analysis accepts that little can be done to affect private market decisions. So the conclusions continue to centre on getting services to the people in the inner city, self-help, small scale cooperatives, improved Government machinery, better local authority use of resources. Economic answers rely on bribes to firms to remain, either by subsidising buildings and land or by a subsidy for each person employed.

Thus although Liverpool's Study suggests an economic development agency for the inner area, it also argues against "Government taking on an ever-expanding responsibility" for inner city economic renewal. The role of the agency would be to "promote" the area with bribes at a local level (advance factories, cheap finance) and at national level (increased rates for regional development grants). Nowhere is any radical intervention suggested in either the land market or in the way decisions about investment are made.

## Control the Economy

Since the Government's much vaunted inner city initiative will be largely based on the Inner Area Studies (backed with less money than they suggest) we must not expect more than another sop. It is clear that the "inner city" can never by itself win the measures and resources it needs. What is needed is a political alliance with residents and workers outside the inner city. For the inner city is not a special problem, but an area which is bearing the brunt of uncontrolled national economic change. The first tasks are to take as much control as possible of these economic changes - at local as well as national level. This is central because even if new investment and new jobs come, they will not meet the needs of working class people. Indeed, any economic growth in the next few years will do little to reduce unemployment - the emphasis will be on new machinery and the re-equipment of British industry.

Both CDP Reports can be obtained from Newcastle CDP, 85 Adelaide Tce, Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne 4.

**"Costs of Industrial Change"** 80p

**"Gilding the Ghetto"** 60p

(Trade only from Publications Distribution Coop, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London ECl.)



A National Conference of Tenants' Organisations is taking place at the end of April. The conference is to discuss and decide on action about:

### What it is about

**1 TENANTS' COMMON PROBLEMS** - arising from cuts in public spending and from the standards of housing, its maintenance and management. Tenants have a lot to contribute to solving these problems - we must be taken notice of.

**2 A NATIONAL CHARTER OF TENANTS' RIGHTS** - Do we need a basic charter drawn up by tenants with national support? It could include what we want in a tenancy agreement to give tenants a better deal. Tenants should also have the right to negotiate locally, as different areas have different needs. What other rights should tenants have?

**3 ORGANISATION** - How can we achieve our rights? Do we need to link up nationally? Regionally? Do we need more resources locally to strengthen tenants' organisation? How can we best affect government and local policy?

### Background

Who is organising the conference? - A group of tenants' representatives from different parts of the country. It is sponsored by the National Consumer Council.

Who can come? - It is for tenants only. It is aimed at drawing together council (and housing association) tenants, but organisations that also include members from the private sector are welcome.

How did it get started? - The NCC published a report on council tenancy agreements last year with a survey of agreements in England. It showed that agreements were one-sided, giving tenants no rights, and that they were often full of ridiculous restrictions on behaviour. The report also proposed a new agreement, giving tenants more rights and a means of enforcing those rights. The NCC is now contacting tenants' groups to get them to try for a better agreement. Tenants have shown a lot of interest and several are already pressing for a better agreement based on the NCC proposals.

At the same time, the Association of London

Housing Estates (a large, London-wide federation) and the National Association of Tenants and Residents (a long established organisation of groups) approached the NCC and asked it to sponsor a national conference, as the NCC had the money and organisation and because of its work on tenancy agreements. Tenants' representatives from Bradford, Liverpool and Warwick Federations joined the original organisers. Tenants from Scotland and Wales should be joining them soon.

Why have a conference? - It is hoping to provide a first step towards a wider link-up between tenants' groups, perhaps around a charter of rights, and to decide on ways of making tenants' action more effective.

### Key issues

There are many different ideas about how tenants could organise best. Some tenants want a national grouping, others feel work must be concentrated locally. Some see tenants' representation on council and government committees as essential, others disagree and support organising around campaigns. Some tenants want to see a tenants' resource centre and communication network nationally, others want more local resources.

The conference is ambitious. It can only begin to answer all the questions and it won't be able to make detailed decisions. If it is going to be a useful basis for further action, it must be firmly based in tenants' grass-roots organisations. So it is up to active tenants' groups to send delegates and put forward what they want.

\* Federations or combined groups of tenants' associations can send two delegates. Individual associations can send one delegate.

\* The NCC will pay travelling costs above £5. Your group pays the first £5 for each delegate, the NCC pays the rest. (You can apply for the first £5 if you are really hard up.)

\* Date - Saturday April 30th in Central London  
\* Write as soon as possible for booking details as there is limited space. You should book by March 31 at the latest.

Tenants' Conference, c/o Rachel Peto, National Consumer Council, 18 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA (tel. 01-930-5752).

# what we say..

Community Action fully supports this opportunity for tenants' delegates from all over the country to meet, exchange experiences and views and to discuss organisation and tactics. We hope that the conference will lead to a strengthening of the tenants' movement as a political force. Obviously any organisation which is set up must be completely independent of Government sponsored bodies like the NCC, as no doubt NCC would agree.

At a time when council housing is under such well orchestrated attack from the financial and property interests, it is vital that tenants campaign and work together to fight the attack and push for an expansion of the council housing sector and for radical improvements in the control, design, standards, facilities and maintenance of council housing.

These demands can only be achieved by political action by tenants' associations and federations. However, we understand that a case is to be put to the conference for forming a national panel of tenants from which tenants would be drawn to sit on national and regional government advisory committees to 'represent' tenants' views.

We feel that this suggestion raises some crucial issues that delegates to the conference will need to discuss within their associations and federations before the conference.

## They call the tune

\* The terms of reference of government committees are not decided by tenants. They arise out of the demands of the housing lobby, demands for cuts in public spending, and pressure from the media and property interests for 'reforming' housing and planning legislation (reform here means less security for tenants, less public participation in plans). Their starting point is therefore how to reduce the size of the cake or how to split up a smaller cake between competing demands - not whether the cake should be increased.



## Who would be represented

\* Whose views would the tenants sitting on the government committees represent? What would be their constituency and how could they be mandated to take a particular view to the committee? In the absence of an active national political organisation of tenants, with regular meetings and a formal structure based on delegates from local tenants' associations and federations through regional organisation to the national level, a panel of tenants 'representatives' would be floating in a political vacuum. And yet to have such tenants on committees would enable the government to say it had 'consulted tenants', which is precisely what happens when trade unions are involved in these committees.



## Membership

\* The membership of these committees is heavily weighted towards the private sector and professionals - a weighting that could never be balanced by one or two token tenants 'representatives'.

## Secrecy

\* Government advisory committees usually sit in private and minutes are not produced. Members of the committee are often not allowed to discuss the committee's proceedings with non-committee members - so any tenants' representatives' would be prevented from reporting back or discussing the issues with other tenants.

## Tenants' views hidden

\* Government committees are usually asked to produce a final report or a committee view for the government. Even if a tenants' representative expressed views directly contradicting those of the professional, property and financial interests on the committee, his or her views would be concealed by the consensus view of the whole committee and (s)he would appear to other tenants as having betrayed their cause.

(see C/A no.28, p32 for an analysis of government committees and the housing lobby.)

# Councils are a friend

## CARDIFF RESIDENTS SOLD OUT YET AGAIN

Cardiff's ambitious central area development plan collapsed in 1974 when the Ravenseft Company pulled out. It had been billed as "The most exciting development of the decade". It burst when the great Property Bubble (1969-73) broke.

### Public subsidy

Since that time Cardiff Council have been trying to save something from the wreckage. What they have managed to do, in the absence of the inflationary property bubble, is instructive. To get development - of shops and offices - the Council has provided large subsidies from the rates in the case of 16 shops. For a very large chunk of offices the injection of funds is from the Land Authority for Wales - the agents of the Community Land Act. One of the main lessons then is the way property speculation can call upon public money and the local government and planning process to survive.

### Real costs hidden

After the Ravenseft debacle Cardiff Council (then Labour) revised the plan by scaling it down to 4 sites as compared to one huge comprehensive redevelopment. Three office block sites and one (500,000 sq.ft.) shopping precinct. The road, a park and transport parts of the plan were hived off by local government reorganisation to the County Authority. This has had the effects of (a) increasing ignorance about the whole plan and (b) hiding the real costs of the shop and office developments. The City Council has just approved these, with not a word about road and car park implications, costs, etc.

### Heron shows up

When the Council advertised the 4 sites there was not a rush from developers, most of them struggling with their cash flows and interest rates. Two finally showed up and of these the Heron Company emerged as the Ravenseft success-

or. Heron is a private company ( $\frac{1}{4}$  of its shares registered in the Cayman Islands) and was first linked with a small local Cardiff company 'Wales and Western' in negotiation with the Council. The role of the latter company has not been made clear.

The story of the negotiations deserves telling in some detail. The original adverts stipulated that developers must provide all the money - the Council none. (The objection to the Ravenseft deal was the huge loss to the ratepayers.) It also linked one plum office block site with the dicier shopping plan - developers wanting the offices had to show interest in doing the shops.

### Developers win Round 1...

Heron's first negotiating success was to sign a separate contract (details unknown) for the office block last April. The Labour Council waived its conditions when apparently Heron explained it was important for their tax position. In any event, Heron was able to make a start on that site before August 1 (Development Land Tax date), while still continuing to negotiate on the shops. The timing has been important because a deadline existed - the Compulsory Purchase Order expired on Feb. 7 this year. Not to sign contracts before then meant a whole upheaval in the process - a chance for more objections, etc. This meant that the developers had a strong hold on the Council who have proved throughout the



# developer's best

most passionate eagerness to get something done. (This itself needs more explanation than there is space for here.)

## ...and Round 2!

Heron's next success was to get an extraordinary 999 year lease for the main store (Debenhams) in the precinct. This was by special permission of the Welsh Office in spite of the Community Land Act, and to the manifest surprise of even the Tories, now in power in the Council.

Soon afterwards, the Council agreed to put public money into acquiring the outstanding land - some £3-4 millions, plus a £5 million concert hall to fill in a hole in the precinct when the County withdrew (as too expensive) its plan for a new library.

## Rent free — for 999 years!

This injection of public funds (the same month housing cuts of over 50% were announced) to keep the thing alive surprised even us students of the property game. But the final contractual terms announced - in confidential documents, 8 days before the decision at the last Council meeting before the Feb. 7 deadline, were even more astonishing. The main stores, in return for a single (small) downpayment - pay no rent. For example, Debenhams (150,000 sq.ft. store) for £525,000 down, get a 999 years lease! The Council's 'return' is less than 4% on its capital and disappears altogether when all the costs (car parks, etc.) are taken into account. If the agreed share-out - investors, developers, Council - is exceeded, the excess is shared - 20% to Council, 80%

to the others! And so it goes on. The City Estates Officer, justifying the poor deal for the city quoted a 1963 circular and a paragraph from the property lobby's Pilcher Committee - i.e. towns can't expect to make a lot themselves if they want to attract capital investment.

## The story isn't over

That story is not over, although the Council agreed the terms (the Labour opposition voted against - the first ever split in all the years of the Centreplan saga). Heron excused themselves from actually signing for a couple more months. So the Council are committed irrevocably to buying the land and the terms. Heron now want to delay starting until 1981! Meanwhile they are hoping to finalise another office block development on one of the other sites.

The truth is, of course, that Cardiff is in recession and with East Moors steelworks due to close (two centre stores are closing now) is not promising for shop investment - unless the public subsidies can be made high enough and the risk is taken by the ratepayers rather than the developers.

## 'Token' housing

Almost unnoticed, the Land Authority moved before the Feb. 7 deadline, to secure the development of the 4th site. Edward Street is the last central residential street - an old community stuck these last years in chronic blight and in the shop window for

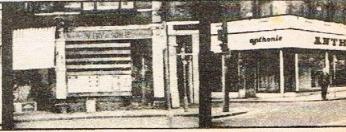


any developer who could raise the cash to acquire the land. None could, until the Land Authority agreed to the purchase. On a small site, the plan is for 400,000 sq. ft. of offices plus some flats - the token paid to the 'spirit' of the Community Land Act. Whether the flats will be suitable for the present residents of the area is doubtful, but there will be some battles about that.

## Depressing lessons

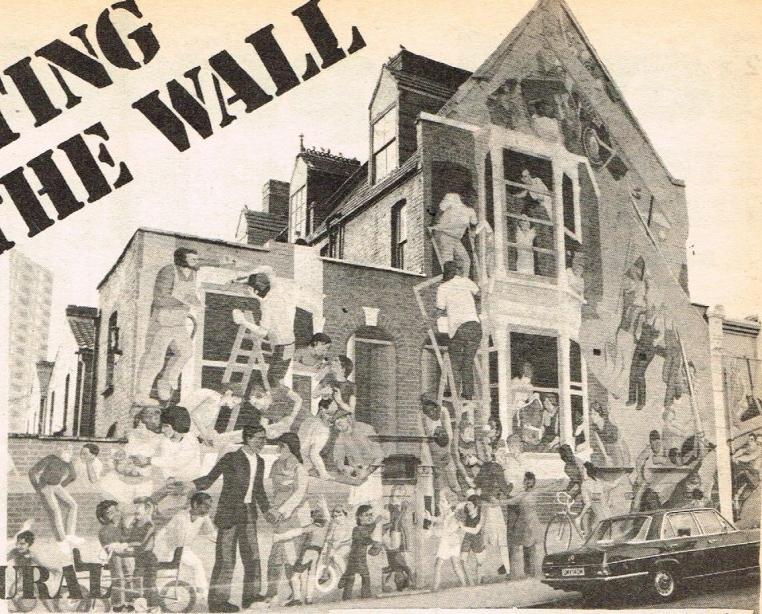
I have concentrated on the money and the developers. There is also the planning question of how the Council could totally change the meaning, financing, spirit and perspective of its approved (Ravenseft) town centre plan but still claim they did not add up to "substantial departures". Since the approved plan said "shopping" and "offices" on roughly the same site, that was sufficient.

Altogether to those of us who had some faith that the great property rackets would breed wisdom and change - these latest lessons from Cardiff are bizarre and depressing. They are not going to learn. We were daft to think they wanted to. Bob Dumbleton, Cardiff Housing Action



# PAINTING ON THE WALL

## HOW TO ORGANISE AND PAINT A STREET MURAL



by GREENWICH MURAL WORKSHOP

STREET MURAL PAINTING started here and in the United States in 1967 and has been flourishing all over the world ever since then. Each location has its own type of mural: political, decorative, social, historical, abstract, realist, illusionist, idealist etc. etc..

In Britain we have a long history of mural painting that goes back to Mediaeval church paintings and beyond, and there are examples of mural paintings in every period of our history. The same impetus that started minority rights struggles and community action produced the present movement, and street murals can now be found in most large towns and cities.

The diversity of subject and style is wide, organisation and speed of working differs. Some street murals involve the community, others do not; some are initiated and made by individuals, others by groups in which the people who make them have only recently begun to make contact with each other.

### A timetable for one project

Our group started two years ago; we see ourselves as a mural resource helping tenants and residents associations in our Borough to design, fund and paint walls in their areas. To give an idea how we work here is a summary of work on one project:

August 1975: Invited by the residents of Floyd Rd., Charlton. We showed slides of murals and discussed with them ideas for a mural on the gable wall of Number 40 which the owner agreed to have painted.

September & October 1975: (1) The Design. We made drawings of the shape of the wall representing ideas suggested by the people. These were discussed and redrawn over a series of meetings until agreement was reached. We made prints of the design and these were shown to everyone in the street. The theme was: Rehabilitate, resist the forces of demolition. (2) Materials, Funds and Permission. We wrote to Crown Paints on behalf of the project and they offered to supply all the paint. We jointly applied to the Greater London Arts Association for a grant to cover additional costs. This they agreed, provided the Council (Greenwich) match their grant, but the first application to the Council was refused, largely because such a new style of project was not well enough explained. We applied for, and after some persistence, were granted permission to erect scaffolding.

November to February '76: The artists and the community lobbied the Councillors, giving more information, and getting up a petition. The Council then agreed to award a grant.

April '76: The scaffolding was erected and the wall repaired and primed. In May the design was drawn onto the wall and painting began.

June to August '76: 30 people worked on the painting, and in September the community and ourselves organised an official opening and a street party to celebrate the completed picture.

### Making a start

Here is a description of how a mural can be organised:-

- 1 Make sure most people in the area want a mural,

ask them for ideas and keep everyone informed what is going on.

**2** Find a suitable wall, preferably one in a good state of repair, one that is prominent, and for which permission to paint is given.

**3** Discuss subjects for the mural very thoroughly, make drawings of the shape of the wall exploring how these subjects could be put together. Also discuss colours.

**4** Look for materials and funding and any permission that is needed.

**5** When the design is decided upon draw it up in large scale eg.  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to a foot so that it gives enough detail and draw a grid of squares over it.

**6** Prepare and prime the wall. Similarly square up the wall (using a Stanley Chalk-o-Matic) and transfer the drawing, square by square, to the wall using pencil or chalk.

**7** Paint the picture using appropriate size brushes. These usually range from 2" bristle brushes to small pointed artist's brushes. Hog hair square-ended fitches about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide costing about 40p.

are very useful.

**8** Children will involve themselves without prompting, adults need more encouragement, partly because they think creative painting is a skill they never had. Remember "it is not that an artist is a special sort of person but that in every person there is a special sort of artist."

## Getting permission

**1** Planning permission is not required unless (a) the image involves an advertisement or (b) is an alteration to the facade of the building. It is nevertheless a good idea to let the planners know what is happening.

**2** Permission has to be got from the owner of the wall, with whom you can take out a lease (for which we have the wording) to protect the picture from being altered for a number of years.

**3** Permission is needed to work on property

adjacent to the wall.

**4** Where scaffolding goes over a footpath you need a pavement licence and permission to have scaffolding erected (which can be got from the Borough Engineer). Electric lighting is needed for pedestrians at night and to warn traffic. You also need to take out personal and third party insurance. Municipal Mutual is one firm that gives this sort of cover.

## Finance & materials

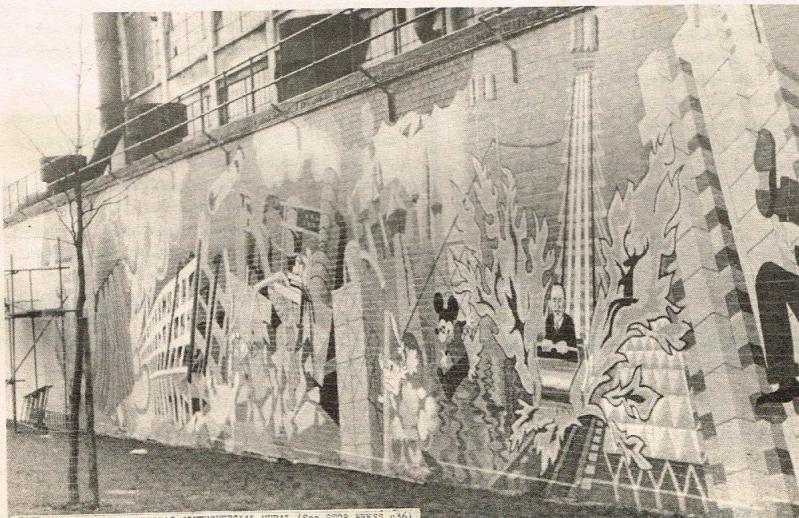
You will need to buy, hire, borrow, or be given some of the following: Paint, mortar mix (sand & cement), brushes, scaffolding or access tower, wire brushes, ladders, trestles, polythene to catch the splashes. You may also need to pay for insurance, pavement licence and to pay wages.

You maybe able to get some materials and equipment free from local dealers and local or national manufacturers.

You may be able to get cash from (a) the Council (b) the local Arts Association (c) the Regional Arts Association (d) local or national firms (e) Trusts, charities, Foundations (f) the Community Arts Dept. of the Arts Council of Great Britain. In writing for funding it is important to show that your organisation is made up of local people. Look around and be imaginative in your search for funds. Do not expect all you need to come from one source - often it's easier to get more money when some has already been contributed. Recreation, Social Services, Housing and Planning Depts. of the Local Authority could all be tried, and enlist the support of the Councillors.

## Useful hints

\* From our experience good communications with Local Authority officers and Councillors is very



MANSWORTH MURAL WORKSHOP'S CONTROVERSIAL MURAL (See STOP PRESS p56)

important in community mural projects, not only for funding but other forms of help, like assistance in getting permissions, technical advice, loan of equipment etc...

\* We emphasise the need for the community to use an artist with them on a mural project because otherwise people are not likely to get a good result. It is equally important that the final picture is good, one that people are proud to have worked on, and that they can live with, and that the act of doing it has been a great experience. Also the artist can teach his/her

skills to the people and can help bring out the artist in them.

PS Anything useful in 'Mural Kit' reviewed in the last issue has been lifted entirely from 'Mural Manual' (Public Art Workshop, 5623 West Maddison St., Chicago) which is very good indeed. Unfortunately the author of the Mural Kit has not been involved in setting up mural projects. Groups who want to contact people with experience of starting murals can contact us. GRENWICH MURAL WORKSHOP 78, Kinveathy Gardens London SE7 (01 855 2828)

## Stop Press!

Owing to complaints from a nearby restaurant owner that the Mural is affecting his custom, Walt Disney may be suing the Wandsworth Mural Workshop for infringement of the copyright on the images of Mickey Mouse, Toad of Toad Hall and Pooh Bear!



LAYCOCK SCHOOL, ISLINGTON



## MURALS IN ISLINGTON

David Cashman and Roger Fagin worked for two years at Laycock School in Islington, where they organised with the staff and the children a series of projects, designing and building play structures, making an outdoor theatre space and a garden in the playground, turning some old lavatories due for demolition into an exciting cavern with a wooden switchback in it. All this and more they achieved on a small budget using the imagination of the children and the techniques and labour they and the children, the teachers, and parents could supply.

One of their mural projects there was painting the front of the school, for which designs were based on the pattern of the bricks. David and Roger silkscreened prints of this pattern and the children's pictures used the grid of lines as a guide. This method offers a great variety of ways to develop a picture, it helped the children relate to the purpose of the design and gave the wall eventually a well organised look. The project was described and discussed fully with the children, who took part in normal lesson time, making over 300 pictures from which

16 were chosen eventually to paint. There was so much discussion and involvement that no-one felt left out of a process that has literally changed the face of the school, so that it now reflects the life within.

Another project devised by the two artists was for each child to be drawn around by a friend against the school wall. The artists then primed the shape with white and after this each child filled in their own full length portrait with colours. In this way every child has made their own image, which is important for their self-awareness and also declares visually the identity and purpose of the place. The effect is stunning - the high murals on the front a result of working collectively, the frieze of children beneath recording individual concern.

Together with achieving educational aims, like increasing the childrens' general awareness, the school has changed through all these projects from a dull looking institution to an altogether more human and lively place.

# LETTERS



Some time ago (C/A no.22, p3, "Tenants with battle over condensation") you published details of the Cannock Lawn case - tenants v. Portsmouth Council - with which we were involved. We are still receiving requests for details from groups wanting to take similar action (two this week!) and wondered if it would be a good idea to publicise firstly the few changes that we have found necessary to make to the procedure for taking such actions, and secondly the areas where such actions are taking place, in case groups want to get in touch with others in their part of the country.

## Changes in procedure

The changes in procedure that we have made in subsequent cases are that we serve the 'abatement notice' ourselves on the Council. It is apparently unnecessary to actually serve an abatement notice on a local authority, so we write to the Housing Department telling them briefly the faults that exist and pointing out to them that the tenants have complained already about these faults. We also say that the tenants will take the necessary legal action if these faults are not rectified within, say, fourteen days. In most cases this letter has the effect of getting the faults put right, or the tenant moved, with incredible speed. In the few cases when it doesn't work you then go ahead with the summons, using a solicitor.

Cases subsequent to Cannock Lawn have established that you either have to prove that a statutory nuisance exists or that the property is injurious to health and a statutory nuisance has to come from outside the property. A derelict house next door from which dampness is coming could well be a statutory nuisance, but dampness or condensation must be shown to be injurious to health. We won a case in November concerning a 'short-life' property where dampness was accepted as being injurious to health.

## Similar action

Groups that have contacted us are in: Dunstable, Cambridge, Dover, Edinburgh, Leeds, Glasgow and we understand that there is a group in London bringing block prosecutions. We have more cases pending and will let you know the results in a couple of weeks.

St Thomas Ward Labour Party Action Group, 30 Margate Road, Southsea, Hants.

# "SCROUNGGERS"

## \*\*\*\*\* Video Film Available \*\*\*\*\*

Spurred on by your feature last year some of us from here made a 15 min video tape on the issue of "scrounging". The tape, which is edited, covers a number of points and consists mainly of street interviews with both claimants and employed people. During the next few weeks it will be copied for both Low and High Density equipment and will then be available for people to borrow for use in connection with any campaigns they may be running to counter attack recent propaganda. So far the tape has been shown at an AUEW/TASS weekend school, as well as at various meetings of different groups in South Wales. We are producing a leaflet for use when showing the tape. There is no hire charge but please send 60p in advance for post and packing to:  
Street Television  
c/o Chapter Arts Centre  
Market Road  
Canton, Cardiff.  
Borrowers should specify whether they want the Low or High Density tape.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Community Action,

We would like, through your journal, to make contact with residents' action groups from all over the country who represent the needs of tenants living in complexes of the industrialised building type. I mean the type of high rise flats made up of pre-fabricated concrete slabs and are connected by a series of walkways and ramps. We have three such estates in the City of Nottingham, Balloon Wood, Hyson Green, and Old Basford. All are suffering from the same kinds of fault due to bad design and poor construction. Some of our people have visited Hunslet Grange in Leeds where the story is the same. Recently Doddington Road flats in Wandsworth had the dubious honour of being featured on a television programme. It was in this programme that Mr Christopher Soames was quoted as having said that the plight of the tenants of Doddington Road did not warrant a Public Inquiry because theirs was merely a local issue and Public Inquiries were concerned only with National Issues.

## Let's start a campaign

O.K., let's make it a National Issue by getting all residents' action groups on these estates to amalgamate all our complaints and problems into one truly national parcel and create such a hullabaloo by using all the media available with a view to gaining for ourselves a Public Inquiry. We at Balloon Wood feel it is possible

continued on page 38.

# REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

**PLANNING AND THE PUBLIC:** A Layman's guide to Scottish Planning Legislation. By West of Scotland Community Workers' Forum. Price 35p from Scottish Council of Social Service, 342 Argyle Street, GLASGOW G2.

A long overdue guide for tenants and residents, advice centres, etc. on the Scottish law relating to compulsory purchase and compensation, public inquiries, planning blight, planning permission and the new planning system in Scotland.

**FAMILY HOUSING FOR THE RIVERSIDE** by North Southwark Community Development Group. Price 25p (inc post) from Community Planning Centre, 108 Great Guildford St. London SE1.

Detailed argument for more family housing to be built on the riverside in Southwark, including an assessment of a number of sites and the schools, health and other facilities needed to support more families in the area.

**YOUR HOUSES...OUR HOMES** by the All Saints Tenants Association, Nottingham. Price 22p (inc. post) from Nottingham Areas Project, 118 Mansfield Road, Nottingham. (0602-582369).

A damning report by the tenants of 26 Church-owned slum houses which condemns the attitudes and behaviour of the estate agents - the only people with whom the tenants were allowed to deal. The tenants forced the serving of compulsory improvement notices on the landlord, and approached a housing association with their

continued from page 37.

and we invite fellow sufferers everywhere to write to us.

Bill St. Roas (Chairman), Balloon Wood Management Committee, c/o 578 Hartington Walk, Balloon Wood, Nottingham. Tel. Nottingham 288519.

demands. They have now succeeded in getting the Church to sell to the housing association.

**STREET BY STREET - IMPROVEMENT AND TENANT CONTROL IN ISLINGTON** by North Islington Housing Rights Project. Price £1.00 from Shelter, 157, Waterloo Rd, London SE1 8UU.

A third report from NIHRP, assessing the housing situation in Islington, and the Housing Co-operatives in particular. States that although the co-ops have been highly successful, even Islington's good housing record is "still relatively modest compared to the sheer size of the remaining problem". Useful for other groups because of the careful and detailed description of the way campaigns were organised.

**HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES:A DIRECTORY OF INFORMATION** by the Housing Co-operatives Working Party. Copies available free (send 12½" x 9" envelope with 1p stamp) from Andy Dunning, 79c Balfour Street, London SE17 1PL.

A basic guide to housing co-ops, the agencies that service them, the official bodies they deal with and the available sources of information about them. Lots of contact addresses, sources of advice for prospective co-ops, and descriptions of a few co-ops. No Editorial comment has been attempted in the Directory.

## Wanted

BY INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION 2 WORKERS TO BUILD A PEOPLE'S EMPIRE IN THE GHETTO.  
Material: 11,000 square feet.  
Director: £3,500. Administrator: £3,000.  
Free flat available. Details from The Factory, Chippenham Mews, London W9.

## HELP TO SELL COMMUNITY ACTION

Please fill in the form below. We will send you some C/A posters and information sheets describing C/A aims together with a list of contents of back issues. Each issue of C/A will be sent on a sale or return basis. We must however have payment and unsold copies returned on a regular basis.

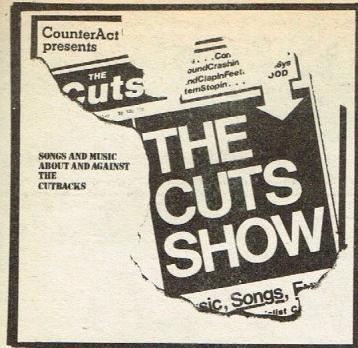
**Please send me**

For discounts for bulk orders, see p2

- 6 copies of C/A
- 9 copies of C/A
- 12 copies of C/A
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\_\_\_\_\_

Community Action, P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ



CounterAct (yes them again!) have made an L.P. of 'The Cuts Show' which is a socialist cabaret about and against the government cutbacks. The music surveys some of the cuts being made and then, goes on to see why the cuts are being made. Through the demands of the bosses, the pressure on the £ by speculators, and the blackmail by the IMF.

Most of the songs are humourous and there is an insert which has all the words + a linking commentary.

Cheap at £2.16 (incl.VAT) + 30p (postage)!! Bulk order reductions. If you want a copy or are interested in the Show for your Public Meeting or Social contact: CounterAct, 27 Clerkenwell Close, LONDON EC1R OAT. 01-251 4977.

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## NURSERY CAMPAIGNS

(cont. from p27)

### 'The Double Shift'

CounterAct Federation, a socialist media group, have written a play called "The Double Shift" about nurseries, the cuts and women's relationship to capitalism. We show how in this crisis mothers and childcare workers face a heavier workload and the threat of sackings, and we suggest how they can fight together. In stylised scenes we show exactly why present provision fails pathetically to meet our real needs, and how state funded childcare should be the right of every mother and child. If you can use "The Double Shift" contact us at 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. 01-251 4977

### Addresses

ADDRESSES OF NURSERY CAMPAIGNS mentioned/who will give help; Hackney Nursery Campaign, Jane Maple, Wetherell Rd Nursery, Wetherell Rd, London E9; Hackney Under Fives, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8; Islington Nursery Action Group, 18 Finsbury Park Rd, London N4; London Nursery Campaign, 26 Lovelace Hse, Haggerston Estate, Haggerston Rd, London E8; Brent Nursery Campaign, Brent Womens Centre, 138 Minet Ave, London NW10; Newcastle Nursery Action Group, 21 Buddle Close, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne 4;

\*\*\*\*\*

## Worker Wanted

Commencing JULY 1977 for a two year period. The Fieldworker will be required to co-ordinate students in community action projects, help develop new projects and be accountable for the running of an active radical organisation.

He/she must have imagination, drive and preferably with administration and field experience and must be committed to the idea of community action.

Salary £2,100 - £2,600 (negotiable). Application forms from: Cardiff Student Community Action, Joint Students Union, Park Place, Cardiff. Tel. 0222 45454. Closing date: 31st March 1977.

## CONFERENCE OF COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

in Bristol on  
17th-19th June 1977

Further information from Bristol Voice, 46 Richmond Road, Bristol 6(Tel. Bristol 40491).

## fighting the cuts

7 issues for £1.20

Screws are on (18)\*: the political motives and choices behind the cuts; the effects they will have the relationship between local and central government: How local Government works (18); where local authorities get their money; how decisions are made: Editorial and A Cut above the Tories (21); the background of the cuts; what they are; campaigns and reactions against them; how to find out about cuts in your area; campaign roundup: Counter Attack (22) the growing resistance to the cuts; why the city wants them;a summary of government circulars;cuts timetable;campaign roundup;Profit and Loss in the Cuts Account (23); the relationship between cuts, wage restraint and unemployment;what's behind the economic crisis; who profits and who loses; points to help determine tactics for organisation and a action; Cuts Calender(26) Tyneside Action Committee Against the Cuts; lessons learnt: Cuts in New Council housing (27) details of the £1 billion July cuts: Fare Fight - campaign against London bus & tube fare increases; £2.5 billion IMF cuts details (29);Cuts in the health services, cuts campaigns.

## Tenants & Workers Joint Action

3 issues for 60p

Residents and Workers Unite(11):industrial initiatives with community links and community action with industrial or union backing; Tenants and Workers(22):the need for joint action ;how to make contact with unions, details of workers organisations:Trades Councils(16):how they work;the role they can play in linking the struggle at work and at home.

\* issue number

## heating campaigns

4 issues for 80p

Tenants out in the Cold(11):the drawbacks of modern heating systems on new council estates  
How to beat your Meter(16):how to act against landlords illegally overcharging for supplying gas and electricity:Power to the People(17): how to get out of debt with gas and electricity boards; your rights during and after conversion; squatters rights to supply;deposits;how to complain:Money to burn:whose fuel crisis?(23): how, to get help with fuel costs:information on local campaigns;proposals to campaign around; problems experienced by tenants associations and tactics which have and could be used.

## INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK 30p

A guide for tenants, workers and action groups on how to investigate companies, organisations and individuals. Details hundreds of sources of information and explains where to find it, how to use it.

## Special Offers

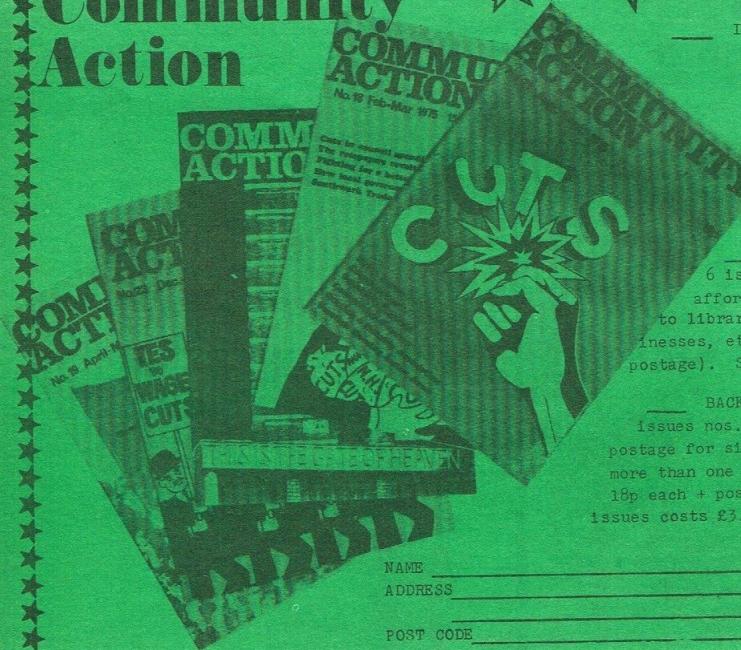
\* Fight the Attack on COUNCIL HOUSING

A special Council Housing package including: C/A issue nos. 24, 25 & 26 - 50 PAGES FULL OF INFORMATION, 1 C/A poster + 5 leaflets plus 2 "Fantasy & Fact" posters. 55p

## DIRECT ACTION & THE POLICE 3 issues for 55p (inc.post)

A three part report on the laws which affect direct action by tenants and community groups and the role of the police in trying to control it.

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4 issues for 80p

TENANTS & WORKERS JOINT ACTION 3 issues for 60p

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ACTION & THE POLICE  
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FIGHT THE ATTACK ON COUNCIL HOUSING @ 55p

FIGHTING THE CUTS  
4 issues for 75p

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# COMMUNITY ACTION

May-June 1977  
No 31

25p

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## COMMUNITY ACTION

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# NEWS & VIEWS



## GLASGOW

### 1000 STRONG ANTI-DAMPNESS DEMO

On Mayday a massive public meeting of 1000 tenants filled to capacity the Citizens Theatre in the Gorbals. The meeting was a demonstration of strength by the Hutchesontown and Laurieston Anti Dampness Campaign (see CA nos 26 and 30) for reports on the campaign).

Pipers led the tenants in a march to the meeting; there was a 'fight' between Mr Fungus and the DampNess Monster outside, and a campaign song inside the theatre.

The politicians (existing and hopeful) pledged their solidarity with the tenants. One regional councillor was so carried away with the mood of the meeting, he demanded the housing manager's resignation and the demolition of the flats.



DAMPNESS MONSTER

## Demands to be met

The tenants demands, which they say the councillors should accept or resign, include: the immediate carrying out of the repairs recommended in the NBA Report (see below), full compensation for damage to tenants' property, a rent reduction for tenants in damp flats, and the setting up of a Parliamentary Inquiry into the dampness in the Gorbals.

The massive meeting followed two other important developments in the campaign. The report of the most detailed survey of the flats to date - carried out by the National Building Agency - was leaked to the press. Many of the report's findings fully support the case the tenants have put forward all along - that the dampness and condensation problems are the result of a combination of design factors, building materials and heating problems - not the tenants' heavy breathing as the Council tried to claim.

## Design faults

The heavy, dense concrete which is slow to respond to changes in the temperature, and the lack of an effective ventilation system have caused the condensation. The cost to tenants of running the all-electric heating system installed in the flats has increased by 119% in 3 years. This and the design of the flats make adequate insulation and heating of the flats impossible.

The report recommends £ million worth of remedial action, including a review of the mechanical ventilation system, additional insulation, and an investigation into a more suitable system of heating the flats.

## Increasing strike action

However, the NBA report does not mention the payment of compensation for mould damage to their clothes and furniture for which the tenants have been fighting all along. And

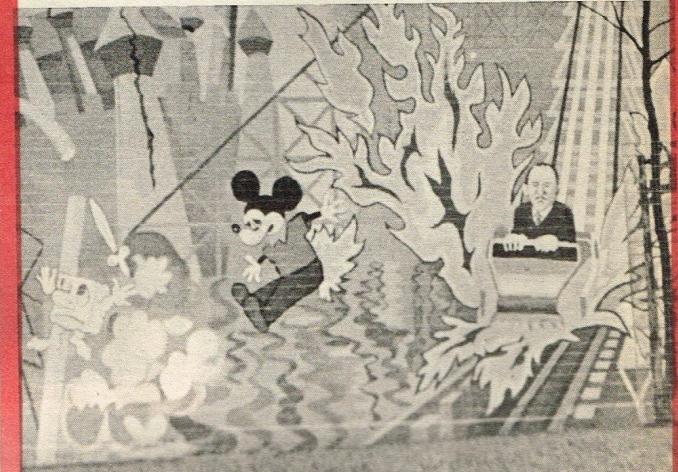
the Glasgow District Council has not yet accepted the report - they are still "studying" it!

The other important development was the fourth court case won by the tenants against the Council's claim for rent withheld in protest against the damp conditions. There are

now 100 tenants involved in withholding rent and the number is increasing all the time.

Further information from:  
Anti Dampness Campaign,  
Laureston Information Centre,  
Block 80, Stirlingfaulds Place,  
Glasgow G5 9BS Tel 041 429 3254

## LONDON CONTINUING THE SAGA OF WALT DISNEY & THE BATTERSEA MURAL



At the end of the Murals article in the last issue of C/A we reported that the full might of the Walt Disney Empire was to descend upon the unlucky Battersea Mural. That was until Pavement exposed the threat to sue the mural over breach of copyright for using Walt Disney images.

Well, from that small story big stories grew, for the Sunday Mirror did a story and The Sun and the Standard. Now unwelcome publicity is something Walt does not like and so when three members of the Mural Workshop went to visit the London Office they found that Walt had changed his tune.

Disney only insisted that they pay the £10 fee for the Copyright, but poverty was pleaded and in the end it was agreed that Walt would donate £10 to

the Mural and they would donate it back!

But that was not all! Apparently they are not pleased with the appearance of Mickey Mouse "Too rat like" was the comment, and so they are getting a Walt Disney artist to come down to speak to the child who painted Mickey - the child it is rumoured is not very happy about this.

The final touching piece of irony is that the local restaurant owner who started it all by complaining to Walt Disney, himself uses Disney images without permission. It is understood that they have written to him warning that he may be sued!

Information from: Wandsworth Mural Workshop, 1 Battersea Church Road, London SW11



## EDINBURGH DAMPNESS ACTION GROUP PREPARES TO GO TO COURT

The Dampness Action Group was formed about a year ago to try to persuade Edinburgh District Council to repair the houses in Wester Hailes which suffer from dampness or condensation. Many of the tenants here suffer from that condition - with streaming walls, black or green fungus and tiny insects which feed off the fungus. In addition many have lost furniture, carpets, clothing, etc. through being too damp to use. Any request for compensation has been refused.

### Cooking & breathing cause damp

The housing officials who call to inspect, consistently tell tenants that condensation is their own fault. They really do blame things like - "cooking in the kitchen ... taking baths ... breathing in the bedrooms", and the only remedy they have suggested is to "turn the heating up and open the windows". Many tenants have been told that they get fungus because "they are dirty", as a consequence many older people are afraid to admit they suffer from dampness.

We have had architects and building experts of our own look at the houses and they

feel there are structural faults in the buildings. Even the architects who designed the scheme admit that the houses are "prone to condensation" because of the lack of insulation in the walls.

### Who is responsible?

We feel that we have now given the Housing Department sufficient time to find an effective solution to the problem. Since the Environmental Health Department are not proving helpful, the only solution would appear to be for us to have a court ruling on the issue - to say whether the landlord or the tenant is responsible for dampness, whether caused by condensation or not, and whether this constitutes a 'public nuisance' as described by the Public Health(Scotland)Act 1897.

We have had discussions with lawyers who advise us that, with the evidence we have

collected, we are almost in a position to go to court.

### Fund for legal battles

However, to do this, we need financial support. Most of the technical and legal experts are working for nothing just now but we need to be prepared to pay costs if we lose the case (we obviously think we will win but we need to be prepared nonetheless). Because most of the money we will collect will be held for this purpose, if the money is not used, it will be put into a trust fund for other groups to use it for similar purposes in the future.

Therefore, I appeal to you to give any support, moral or financial, that you can.

Wester Hailes Dampness Action Group, V. Gilmarlin (secretary), 4/56 Hailesland Park, Edinburgh.



GILL STREET

## NEWCASTLE GILL STREET TENANTS COME TO GRIPS WITH CRISIS

The Gill Street Tenants Association has been active in the Gill Street area of Benwell since the new houses were built 3 years ago. Up till now we have been dealing with relatively minor issues, although the series of 4 rent

rises in 3 years have made us angry as conditions in the estate and repairs services have not got better. Now, however, many tenants in Gill Street itself are faced with a situation of damp coming through the walls and ceilings which could become a disaster. The problem is water collecting on the flat tops and then penetrating through the roof and walls.

## What the problems are

In the 3 storey flats in Gill Street, which were built by G.M. Pearson, we have already had the following problems:

- water coming through ceilings and running down walls;
- collapsing ceilings (one tenant has had 3 ceilings in 2 years);
- crumbling plaster, and cracks in walls/rotting woodwork;
- electrical plugs fusing;
- water lying on roofs and streaming down walls.

## Possible legal action

At first the Housing Dept paid several visits to the houses but no one would admit what was wrong or what they were going to do about it. So we had an independent survey done by an architect and we were prepared to take legal action using either the 1936 Public Health Act or the 1957 Housing Act, if necessary.

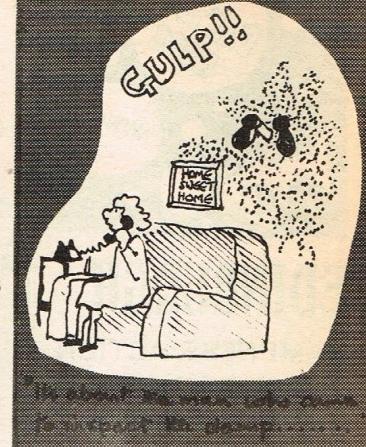
From what we hear, there is now a citywide crisis in Newcastle in the new council housing involving thousands of houses. Already the following estates have experienced one or more severe problems:

Campbell Close, Elswick (builder Faircloughs)  
Sandyford (Stanley Miller)  
South Benwell (Laing's)  
Kenton Bar (John T. Twiname)  
Lynton Park, Blakelaw (Shepherd Homes)  
Arthurs Hill (Shepherd Homes)  
Hillheads, Westerhope (Bellway)  
Blakelow (Bellway)

have got very little satisfaction from the builders (who blame bad weather!) and it looks as if we could be in for years of legal wrangles. In addition the Council keep trying to blame the tenants and saying (as usual) that it is just condensation. But condensation doesn't cause ceilings to collapse!!

## Owning up to the faults

We have finally got the council to take action. We had a meeting in late April with tenants of the affected houses and local councillors, members of the Housing Committee and officials from the Architects and Housing Depts. The council have now admitted that there are faults in the houses and have promised to take remedial action and to redecorate where necessary. The Gas Board have also admitted that there are



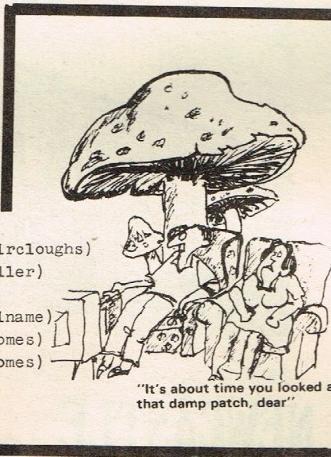
## WANDSWORTH COUNCIL THREATEN TO SUE TENANTS!

In the last issue (page 9) we reported that the tenants on the Surrey Lane estate were fed up with being fobbed off by the Council who have refused to do the necessary repairs to stop the damp affecting over 100 flats. The damp has meant that rooms are unusable and are a danger to health.

## Court action

The tenants decided to take Wandsworth Council (London) to court under Section 99 of the Public Health Act, to force it to carry out its responsibilities. However, the Council clearly does not want to be seen to react to the tenants pressure. Not content with years of delay the Council tried intimidation. The Legal Director informed the tenants that the Council would sue them for costs if they lost the case.

Then on the first day of Court the council produced another surprise. They argued that the summonses were incorrectly drawn up



## Tenants blamed

All of these estates were built by private builders in the past 5 years and in several cases the Council bought them even though they were lower standards than normal council houses to prevent the hundreds of houses standing empty from 1974 onwards. So far the Council

faults with the installation of the ducting for the central heating system. We will be keeping a keen eye on how the work progresses and to make sure that, unlike many other pre-election promises, these ones are carried out.

Bob Watson, 49 Cochrane Court  
Gill Street, Newcastle 4  
Tel. 33270



and should be thrown out of court. That failed so the Council has tried another tack to delay and discredit the tenants case. They are saying the tenants create the dampness themselves by "not heating and ventilating their dwellings sufficiently". To make this outstanding point the Council has brought in to court an army of experts and officials to win its case. The hearing is expected to last at least six days.

### Tenants must win

The Council is spending a great deal of money in order to win this case and using tactics that no private landlord would dare to use. What has become clear is that this is a case the Council is determined not to lose. For the Surrey Lane tenants and all other council tenants it's a case they must win. The Council as a landlord is responsible for repairs and must be forced to carry them out. Not doing repairs is another example of how the council evades its responsibilities and saves money. The demand of all tenants should be that all repairs should be done by the council and the necessary people employed to carry them out.

Contact : PAVEMENT at FAAC, 539, Battersea Park Rd, London S.W.11. Tel : 01-228-1559

### DAMPNESS GUIDE

TORRY CITIZEN No.7 has a useful four-page section on Dampness, its causes, its effects in terms of illnesses caused, and some solutions. The paper is produced by a group of people who live or work in Torry, Aberdeen, and costs £1 for a year's subscription or 10p for a single issue (postage included).

Torry Citizen, c/o Phoenix Club-rooms, North Balnagask Road, Torry, Aberdeen.

## BURY

### 'WELL DESIGNED' ESTATE - NOT SO GOOD TO LIVE ON

In 1970 judges of the 'Good Design in Housing Schemes' highly commended the Milltown Estate. The 33 houses and 13 OAP bungalows had been built the previous year in an intensely industrialised part of Radcliffe town centre.

But in the first 6 months residents complained of subsidence. They were told a slight slope in the floor was nothing to worry about. The exterior brickwork of the house was the next thing to cause headaches ... The brickwork is highly porous - mould growth and moss, algae and lichen is there for all to see. The Director of Planning and Architecture states that the brick was chosen on the grounds of economy and is unsatisfactory. The estimated cost to put right the exteriors was stated at Bury Housing Services Committee meeting to be at least £60,000.

### Heating problems

The interiors of the houses also suffer from damp and greenmould on the walls; the problem of condensation and bad ventilation also exists. The houses are very cold and illness in both adults and children is common. The central heating chosen for the estate is electric underfloor heating on the ground floor; there is no heating to the bedrooms. Although gas mains already run under the houses, no gas at all is supplied. Central heating and electricity bills are enormous ... £120 to £180 for the houses, £80 plus for the OAPs' bungalows.

Residents in the houses hardly ever use the underfloor heating because of the expense, its inefficiency and the inability to control the thermostat.

There is no play area for the kids and cycling has officially been stopped by notices erected on the estates. The main road is only 20 yards away and parents fear that their children may decide to play there.

*"Have you got anything that doesn't mind living on the 7th Floor, is house-trained, and won't swim out of the window?"*



### No warden for OAPs

The estate has no warden system to look after the needs of the elderly and on more than one occasion pensioners have been found dead by relatives visiting them.

In our newly formed tenants association we are asking for rent and rate reductions, for a completely new gas central heating system throughout the houses and bungalows, and a warden for the old people. Residents are to meet Bury Metro Housing Director, Mr Frank Hilson, to state their case, but many are pessimistic of the outcome, as Mr Hilson has a local reputation for chasing tenants who are in arrears and a reputation among the local tenants for disregarding their opinions and grievances.

We would like to share our experience of fighting bad heating systems with other groups. For further information contact Eric Leach, 5 Milltown Close, Radcliffe M26 9WD. Tel. 061-723-5913.

## BURY RENT SQUAD NIGHT RAIDERS

The Housing Director is certainly living up to his reputation. Latest scheme in Bury's 'Get Tough' policy on rent arrears is a series of swoops on council tenants - at night.

Pictured here in their regulation black plastic mags, the Bury Goon Squad is briefed by Herr Kommandant Hilson before setting out on yet another daring night raid - this one in Radcliffe, Prestwich and Whitefield.

There is reported to be no truth in the rumour that on their next outing they will be wearing black faces and flak jackets.

*Pictured receiving their instructions from Mr Hilson are (back row left to right) Mr A. Hamer (senior housing officer); Mr W. Young (housing assistant, Bury); Mr R. Wilcock (principal housing officer); Mr W. Needham (housing assistant, Whitefield); Mr W. J. Naylor (bailiff); seated are Mr J. Dean (housing assistant, Bury); Mr R. Dawson (area officer, Whitefield); and Mr W. Jackson (area officer, Radcliffe).*



## NOTTINGHAM HOUSING CUTS LEAD TO FORMATION OF THE HOUSING ACTION GROUP

The cuts in the housing expenditure in Nottingham led in April 1977 to the formation of a group of people who organised a Housing Workshop. Out of this workshop, which was sponsored by the Local Federation of Tenants Associations came the Nottingham Housing Action Group which was formed with the very definite aims:-

- to inform everybody in Nottingham what is going on concerning housing cuts.
- to conduct a public education programme on the whole system and finance of council house building
- to actively fight and organise for better housing conditions.

### Booklet produced

A comprehensive booklet was produced for the workshop, covering:

RENT INCREASES - an average 84p rise last year, up to £2 for some tenants and the government is demanding a 60p rise this year

REPAIR STANDARDS - large cuts, cuts in gardening for OAP's, D.I.Y. for Council tenants

COUNCIL HOUSE SALES - all council houses are being offered for sale when they come empty, many of the new ones at a loss - about £5,000 per house loss at Grotto Farm

NEW BUILDING PROGRAMME - plans to build thousands of houses just outside the City have been shelved, purchase of private houses by the council has been stopped, and no more council houses will be built

IMPROVEMENTS - the Government has severely restricted the amount of money the Council can spend on improvements - for both council houses and private houses. The improvement section of the direct works department is being closed down - meaning increased costs for improvement.

TENANTS CHARTER - eg right of appeal against eviction, control of management, right to transfer.

### Need for wider campaign

The booklet is just a starter; it was made up from information that is publicly available although some of the material was difficult to work into a sensible shape. The main sources of information were: the Council Minutes, Housing Acts and Community Action. The cuts are ongoing, so we have to recognise that we must constantly sift through minutes etc to keep up to date. If anybody wants a booklet please send 10p + large SAE to the address below.

The group at present is made up of constituent members of Nottingham Federation of T.A.s and there are close links with the Trades Council Cuts Committee, plus other interested persons. We had difficulty in getting through union bureaucracies to advertise the workshop, at a shop-floor level, but some success through tenants and their union links with their workplace. We recognise that there is a need to develop further our campaign amongst the shop floor and would welcome any hints on how to do so.

### Next-a monthly tenants newspaper

The group's next target is to print a monthly tenants newspaper with a mass circulation to counter the propaganda presented by the media. In order to reduce costs of the campaign as a

whole, planning must go into the printing eg covers of the newspaper will serve as posters, press statements coupled with articles in the newspaper itself.

For further information:  
contact N.H.A.G.  
c/o 118 Centre for Community Groups, Nottingham.  
Tel: 0602 582369

## AND KIRKBY WORKSHOP ON HOUSING FINANCE

The Kirkby Union of Community Associations held a day-long workshop on housing finance in early May. Attended by delegates from community and tenants groups, trade unions and political groups, the workshop resolved to hold a public inquiry into the management of the Housing and Maintenance Depts. Another resolution condemned the Labour Govt. for its present policies and called for the immediate nationalisation of land, the financial institutions and the building industry and pledged support for tenants and workers struggles for better housing.

## MANCHESTER LAUNDRY CAMPAIGN

Despite Council figures claiming that only 25 people a week used the Greenwood House estate laundry in Longsight, the action group formed to fight its closure found that 87 families used the laundry regularly. When the laundry was closed, tenants in the action group marched on the Town Hall and the result was that the laundry has been re-opened for a 3 month trial.

Greenwood House Action Group, c/o no.44, Greenwood House, Longsight, Manchester.

## INNER CITIES ANOTHER SOP

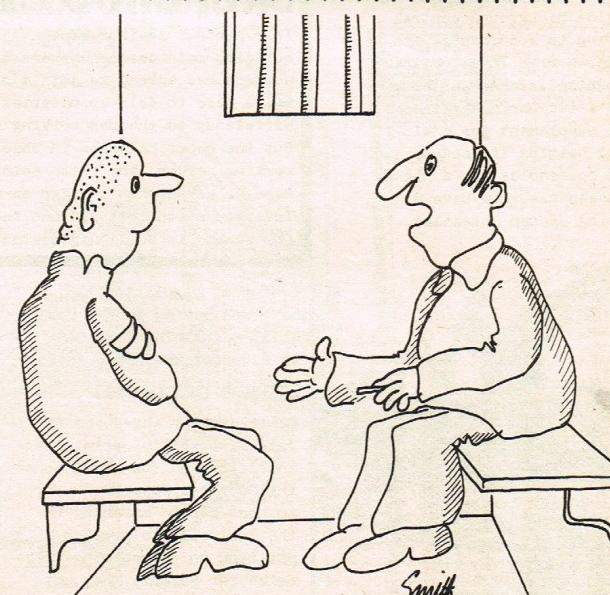
With the Chancellor's Budget announcement and Peter Shore's statement to the Commons, the government's much heralded inner city initiative has finally been launched. It amounts to £100m over the next 2 years - aimed to boost the construction industry - and then, from 1979 for 10 years, an extra £95m a year on the Urban Programme (now to be run by the DoE, not the Home Office). The emphasis will be on employment and on "partnerships" between local and central government. The first £100m will be for projects like housing and factory rehabilitation, school building extensions, industrial improvement areas and so on. It is aimed mainly at 5 areas: Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and Salford, London Docklands and Lambeth. Other "inner city" authorities can put in bids for some £26m that remains.

There are some obvious drawbacks - even in this sketchy outline. Firstly, the amount is derisory compared to the cuts that have already been made even in the inner city areas. Docklands Boroughs for example have already cut their capital spending by £19m (in money terms, £40m in real terms) between 1975/6 and 1976/7. So the £17m offered to Docklands nowhere near makes up for cuts already made.

Secondly, the areas are tiny and arbitrary compared to the problem. Why Lambeth and not Hackney? Liverpool not Newcastle? And so on

### Little backing

Thirdly, the programme doesn't appear to have got much backing from the Department of Industry - still hell bent on the government's industrial strategy of increasing productivity whatever the cost in jobs. Yet its backing is plainly vital if the flight of industry from the inner city is to be stemmed, let alone reversed.



"AS A MATTER OF FACT I GOT DONE FOR  
SELLING JUBILEE STREET BUNTING TO  
TOWER BLOCK RESIDENTS".

Fourthly, the long run spending will be in the Urban Programme. In the past, this has been used to cushion the effects of decline. It certainly isn't by itself a sound base to rebuild the economies of declining areas.

## YORK HEATING GROUP TAKES ACTION

Since February tenants on the new Foxwood Lane Council Estate, York, have been campaigning against their ineffective and expensive heating systems.

A financial arrangement between York City Council and the Electricity Board resulted in 2 types of heating system being used: half of the houses have a gas warm air system and the rest an electric storage heater/radiator system.

### Massive bills

Both systems are supposed to provide background central heating in accordance with Parker Morris (i.e. officially recognised) standards; both have a two-bar electric fire supplement for additional heating if needed, and both households pay a higher rent because they have a heating system installed.



Foxwood Lane Estate  
However, those with electric systems have had problems getting satisfactory temp-

## BIRMINGHAM ACTION GROUP FIGHTS TO SAVE DIRECT WORKS



Nearly 3000 people marched against the threatened closure of the New Construction Dept on April 20th. 450 jobs are at stake. The next day the Housing Committee awarded the department a new contract. However the Tory Council is split and the future of the dept. is still uncertain. A Joint Action Group has been formed and UCATT has set up a West Midlands Action Committee representing 10,000 council building workers to coordinate the defence of all direct works depts., to fight for improved pay and conditions, an end to the lump and the re-introduction of the Direct Labour Bill.

UCATT, Gough St, Birmingham B1 (Tel. 021-643 4151)

## SALFORD OCCUPATION OF DIRECT WORKS

In a protest against management's inefficiency 90 Salford Council building maintenance workers occupied part of a council depot. The workers had agreed to join a new bonus scheme in which Council managers were to deliver materials and plans with greater speed and efficiency to the men working on housing maintenance and improvement. But the depot had been in chaos ever since, while the men had been working harder. The flash point came when the Building Maintenance Manager asked them to sign an agreement to cause no further trouble. The occupation followed and the "agreement" has been withdrawn and the scheme is being negotiated again. ("Salford Champion")

eratures, regulating the heat and paying higher fuel bills - anything from £90 to £150 for the March quarter.

### Office occupied

These brought anger and frustration to boiling point. Tenants occupied the local Housing Services Department for an hour before marching on the Guildhall to present a petition to the Housing Executive, Mr Howell. They got local press and TV coverage and 15 of them took the petition to the next Housing Services Committee. They then set up a Foxwood Tenants' Heating Group,

surveyed the whole estate and made tenants' grievances known to the Council.

To date the Council's only response has been to demand an official architect's report and to accept that an independent heating engineer make recommendations on alternative systems. The group is planning action over payment of fuel bills, and tenant action will continue until satisfactory solutions are found.

Foxwood Tenants Heating Group,  
10 Herman Walk, Foxwood,  
York.

# LONDON

## SLIDIE JO: TENANTS CAMPAIGN FOR MUNICIPALISATION HIT BY COUNCIL MANOEUVRES

When we last reported on the Slidie Jo saga (in C/A No.30) the CPO had just been refused on 11 February, but the Council could still avail itself of DoE Loan Sanction and purchase the properties by agreement. At that stage, Uncle Jo did seem all too willing to agree but the Council was dragging its feet. How could we predict then the amazing chain of events of events that followed?

### 14 February

TA Committee meet chairperson and vice of Housing Committee to try and persuade them to proceed with purchase on a voluntary basis. Outcome - hopeful.

### 15 February

Special Housing Committee meeting to assess the position. Housing Committee re-affirms its intention to go ahead. Looks like our views of the night before are upheld. (BUT all committee decisions are subject to ratification first by Management Committee - the senior committee - and then the full Council.)

### MP "screwed up"

Since we felt that Management Committee might be less sympathetic towards us than Housing Committee, the TA Chairperson & Secretary went to see the Leader of the Council (who is also the Chairperson of Management Committee). Not very promising! Other Management Committee members were also lobbied, together with the local MP, Mr Guy Barnett, who declared himself to be "emotionally screwed up about the whole affair". (Not half as screwed up as the tenants!)

### 8 March

Special Management Committee meeting considers Housing Com-

mittee's recommendation, but overturns it, eleven to six. WHICH COMMITTEE IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXPERT ON HOUSING? This dealt the TA a heavy blow - we felt that our lobbying had ensured the right decision.

### Swelling the ranks

Undeterred we threw ourselves into a desperate all-out attempt to get the Management Committee over-ruled by full Council - something which is virtually unheard of! This involved a petition letter circulated to local TAs, Trades Council, Labour Party groups, Students' Unions, MPs and anyone else who might help. Suddenly the issue had become one of Borough-wide interest; we discovered many hitherto unknown supporters and allies; people willing to lobby other people on our behalf and help swell the ranks. Encouraging, but would it be enough?

### 21 March

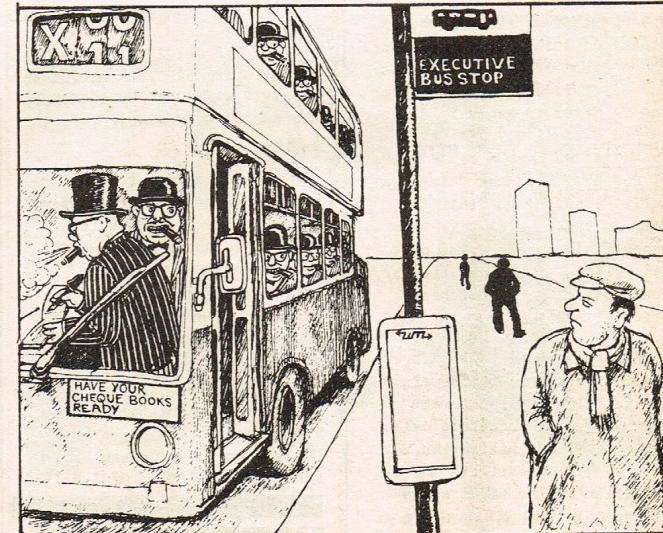
Labour Councillors' "Group"

holds its regular pre-Council meeting behind closed doors. On a vote, the majority decide to proceed with the deal. The Group also votes to put a whip on for the full Council meeting (i.e., so that dissenters and Tories cannot defeat Labour majority, the dissenters must abstain rather than oppose, or risk expulsion from the "Group".)

### 23 March

Ceremonial full Council meeting. TA Committee and members in Public Gallery. Prolonged beating of breasts, conscience salving and heart searching drivel. (Councillors all very concerned about our future, but still have hands on wallets.) Chairperson of Housing Committee is denied her right to reply. Two divisions on amendment and main motion result in an amazing 26 abstentions and two betrayals! BUT the majority of full Council VOTE IN FAVOUR OF PURCHASE. (Apparently a victory, - sure-

## LEEDS FIGHTING FARE INCREASES



Bus workers and community groups have joined together to set up a Public Transport Group. Bus fares in Leeds are going up by 25%. We are looking into various ways of fighting this both through the Traffic Commissioners and elsewhere. We would like to hear from other groups and campaigns who are or have been involved in a similar dispute.

Leeds Campaign Against the Cuts, John Williams, 21 Village St, Leeds

ly nothing can over-rule full Council's decision.)

### Victory

That same night we celebrated, AND HOW! A notice was sent out to all our members proclaiming that they would be Council tenants by that weekend. (Payment was due to take place on Friday 25 March.)

### 24 March

Unfortunately, there is no law which forces anyone to act in accordance with a democratic decision. (OR is there?) Having lost through the democratic process, the opponents to purchase decide to ignore full Council's decision and find a loophole. Seemingly, the morning after the full Council had voted (following five months of negotiations since the Public Inquiry) Council officers SUDDENLY discover hitherto "un-noticed" vandalism. This necessitates a re-evaluation of the properties.

WHAT A GET OUT - SURELY THEY DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL BE TAKEN IN BY THAT KIND OF EYE-WASH?

Why had the vandalism suddenly become of such vital importance? There was NOTHING new about it. Indeed, following a letter from the TA dated 17 February concerned exclusively with the vandalism we have a reply dated 25 February from the Chief Executive assuring us "that the Borough Valuer will take into account all the relevant considerations if the question of re-negotiating the purchase price arises".

Either the Council, with at least five weeks' notice of the vandalism failed to act upon it and is therefore culpable of maladministration, or, if they did investigate the vandalism at the right stage it was only brought up again as a transparent excuse to avoid the purchase when all other tactics had failed.

Having been done out of his cash, Uncle Jo is playing silly games again and won't co-operate with the so-called reval-

uation, so it's stalemate, with the tenants still the pawns in someone else's game.

### There are no rules

Readers, please take heed how easily the democratic wish of the majority even in august bodies like the Council can be completely ignored. The rules of the game just don't apply when the stakes are high enough.

Despite the present stalemate we have succeeded in attracting a good deal of public interest. This, no doubt, was one of the principal reasons for the ....

### Ministry visit

Yes, indeed, Mr Ernie Armstrong in spite of his officers' previous visit, came to see for himself the squalor in which our members have to live. TA officers accompanied him and the other 30 odd visitors on their sight-seeing tour. We think we had some success in persuading him that demolition is the only answer. However, no news from the Ministry yet. Just another meeting expected - DOE officers with the Council this time.

IF ONLY THE ORIGINAL INQUIRY HAD MADE THE SENSIBLE DECISION, ALL THIS WASTE OF PUBLIC MONEY WOULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED.

### Help

Can anyone advise or assist us with ideas or practical support as to how we can force this Council to honour its commitment to us?

If you think that this estate should be municipalised, and you want to help, please write or telephone -

Stella Nickolay, Secretary, Glenforth & Glenister Estate Tenants' Association, c/o 1 Collerston Road, Greenwich, London SE10. (Tel: 01-858 1587)

## NOTTINGHAM TENANTS OCCUPY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Nottingham's Balloon Wood Estate is rapidly becoming as

famous, or perhaps, infamous as Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest.

For several years we and previous action groups have been pressing the Council to execute major repairs for which they are liable. Nothing very much, just great cracks in the concrete walls, bowing walls, water penetration that strips wallpaper much faster than Polystripper, and overflowing toilets which regurgitate their contents over carpets and fittings, and fill the house with the stench of decaying faeces.



No action has ever been taken except to cover the walls with paper again, or in the case of the overflowing toilets, move the tenants out to another house, mop up the mess, then re-allocate the flat to another poor unsuspecting tenant.

### Outlining the faults

Not unnaturally, we felt a little bit peeved about this, so we produced a five page document outlining all the faults and suspicions. We were well aided in this by a similar document which had been produced by the Hunslet Grange Action Group whose tenants had experienced faults very similar to ours in flats of identical design to our own. Our document (copies from address below) was submitted to the Director of Housing and to members of

the Housing Committee.

The Housing Dept. found a couple of people who could write Fairy tales and gave them the job of reproducing our document into a form that councillors prefer to read. The result was astonishing; gone were our major faults which took all of a couple of minutes to get through,

With regard to the major issues the document was deferred pending talks with the Balloon Wood Management Committee. One of our party, an old lady, could contain herself no longer and asked permission to speak. This request was denied by an outraged Chairman; after all, she had not gone through the proper channels.

## Meeting results in promises

We pressed hard for the promised meeting and got it. The Director of Housing with his many commitments was unable to make it. He was on holiday, but we had the Housing Committee Chairman, our own Councillor, and one of several men who hold the title of Deputy Director of Housing. The meeting took as its agenda the seven demands we made to the housing department.

Our surprise and delight can be well imagined, for as the meeting progressed, each demand was met and firm promises were made. In fact, only on one point was there any disagreement. Both sides finally agreed that the huge heating bills were the province of the Electricity Board and not the Council. All in all we felt we had won the day and with our hopes renewed we called the meeting to a close.

## Project Centre rejected

The following week however, all was back to normal. We had made a formal application for a flat on the estate to be used by all our groups as a project centre. It was generally agreed in all departments that we had an

excellent chance and it was to be a routine matter for the housing committee, but once again our application was totally misrepresented at the meeting and was turned down. With a further turn of the screw the meeting also disregarded the promises of their chairman and refused to come to the estate on a tour of inspection.

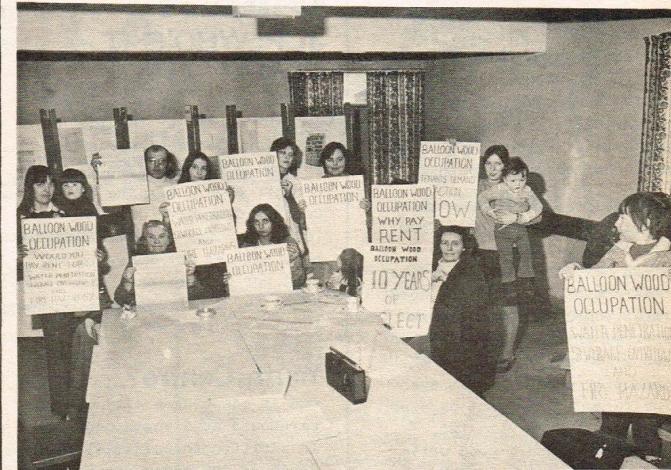
## Centre take over

A little over a week later at a full meeting of our committee we decided to take firm action. A long term plan was drawn up and passed. The first stage was to be an occupation of our Community Centre. This was planned for the week preceding Easter and the estate was alerted by means of leaflets although our intentions were still to be kept secret. The next week was spent in printing leaflets, letters, press releases, and further copies of our housing document. We also reproduced the Housing director's version of our report together with another document which pointed out all the differences.

bedding, games for the kids, in fact everything we needed for a long stay. One of our committee stayed at home near her phone to act as our press and radio agent. We took meter readings so that the council could not charge us with stealing electricity, and once we had completed all our preparations, we chained the front doors and made arrangements for our tenants and friends to use one of the fire exits as a means of access. Then we informed the caretaker of our action and pointed out that we had kept him in the clear.

## Press coverage

A couple of us left for town to start the town publicity which was not successful as far as the general public were concerned but we handed several letters into the council house for the leaders of both political parties and the director of housing. We also handed in our first press releases and gave interviews to the press and the two local radio stations, one of them interrupted a programme of



Our entry into the community centre was legal, we booked the place for the purposes of holding an open meeting. Once the caretaker had let us in we started moving in our equipment. By the time we had finished we were set up for printing further leaflets, our canteen was manned, we had music to put over our bulletin. Meanwhile back at base things had moved quite a bit. Supporters from other estates in the city had come to join us. A petition asking for support for what we were doing was under way on the estate and doing well.

By mid afternoon the local paper was carrying our story and publishing our demand for our document to be discussed at the next meeting of the housing committee which was to take place the following Thursday.

A further broadcast was made that evening in which we challenged the council to keep their promises and reiterated our demand for a place on the next agenda.

Satisfied that our first day had gone reasonably well we planned Day Two. A further Press release was printed, and plans were drawn up for a workable system to enable our groups to carry on their normal weekly activities in the community centre.

### Radio talk-in

Day two started with us listening to ourselves on the radio. We decided to ask some awkward questions on a radio phone-in programme involving the director of Housing, and several Housing Committee members. When I tried to interrupt their glib replies, I found my microphone had been switched off. Even so, both the Housing Committee chairman and the Director of Housing committed themselves over the air by admitting all the problems of our estate, although all they had to offer was sympathy.

The rest of the day was spent gaining extra publicity from all the local media. The press came to Balloon Wood to take photographs and get more interviews. A.T.V. cameras arrived in the afternoon when about 150 people were in the community centre. That evening we made the front page of our local paper with two photographs and a good write up. We were also on T.V. that evening with a promise of further coverage for our march on the council house on Thursday.

### Getting ready to march

Day three was a repeat of the first two days and we were concentrating hard on our petition, making final

arrangements for our march, and producing posters and banners. We had already decided that with the Easter holiday looming up we would be vacating the Centre the following day. As this was to be our last night in occupation we decided to have a small party for the workers.

The march went well and so did our demo but we were unable to lobby the councillors because they sneaked into the council house by means of a back entrance. Several of our marchers went into the meeting and succeeded in having their say but we did not get onto the agenda.

We are now into phase two of our campaign because we know we have lots of support from all over the city and we refuse to give in.

Bill St. Roas, Balloon Wood Management Committee, 136 Beeley Walk, Balloon Wood, Nottingham.

## CARDIFF

### JCP: WHO'S IT REALLY FOR ?

Groups should be on the lookout for abuses of the Job Creation Programme, as the following example from Cardiff shows. In the case of Cardiff Community Concern (CCC) the City Council would have allowed JCP money to be used for converting a warehouse for a private firm if local voluntary groups hadn't protested.

### Youth Centre?...

CCC is adapting a city centre warehouse as a youth centre. In addition to nearly £19,000 worth of JCP money - a condition of which is that it should not be used for private profit - they have had donations as a registered charity, and grants from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the Prince of Wales Committee, Workers' Education Association and South Glamorgan Social

Services Committee, among others.

CCC's problem was that their warehouse was owned by the Council and rented to them on a "tenancy at will" - meaning that the Council could repossess the building when they wished, "in view of the property being required for redevelopment purposes in due course" - but demolition was not expected before 1979.

### ...or private industry ?

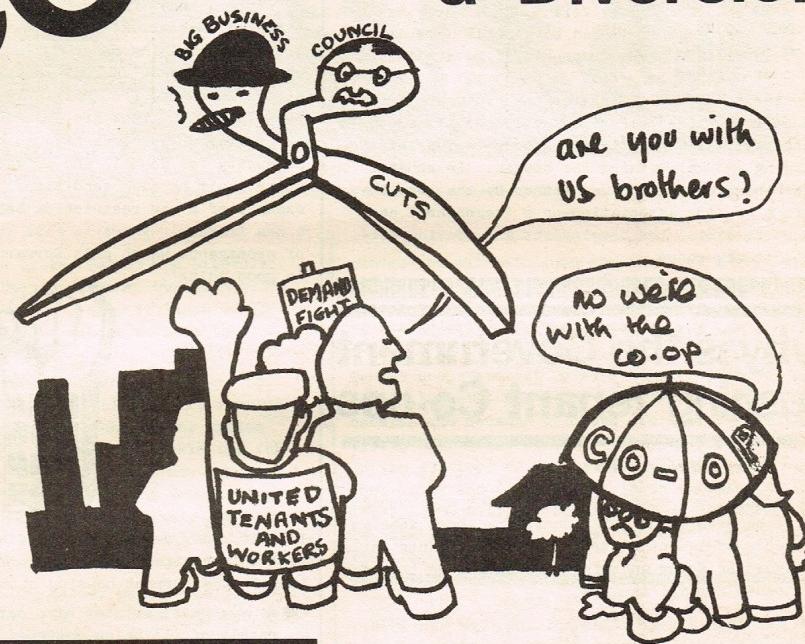
When CCC applied for Urban Aid money for some extra improvements they had to go to the Council. To their amazement (and that of the Council officers who'd been advising them), the Planning and Development Committee refused the request. Not only this, it recommended that "The City Valuer and Estates Officer be instructed to re-possess the property for re-allocation to firms displaced by the Central Development Area proposals."

Not only was a different area already ear-marked for displaced warehouses - but the JCP money and other donations would effectively have been spent on improving the building for a commercial warehouse operator! Protest was effective: the proposal was referred back from full Council on 30th March and rescinded by Planning and Development a fortnight later. CCC is now applying for a 5 year extension to their planning permission.

## CENTRAL HEATING CAMPAIGN

A meeting of over 100 tenants marked the start of a central-heating campaign by the Ranwell Tenants' Association, on 18th April. The estate since its completion two years ago, has never had an efficient, adequate or properly maintained heating system. Now heating charges have been increased by 50p-60p but tenants are withholding payment and getting an independent survey of the heating system done. c/o John Morris, 68 Wilmer House, Bow, E3 (tel: 01-980 6036).

# TENANT CO-OPS — a Diversion



## introduction

There have been a number of developments since we discussed 'Tenant Control' in the Action Report on Council Housing last year (CA No 25, pp 26-28).

- the encouragement of tenant coops has continued to grow and the Cooperative Housing Agency (CHA), part of the Housing Corporation, is now operating. It helps to set up and promote coops.
- both tenant and worker coops are being advocated to help 'solve the crisis of the inner cities', e.g. Save Our Cities Conference (see last issue of CA). The final report of the Government commissioned Inner Area Studies, published earlier this year, states: "We believe that considerable savings might be found in some sectors of hous-
- ing.....there is a need for policies that give people the opportunity and the incentive to take action for themselves rather than become increasingly dependent on government for services" (now being quoted by CHA to "highlight the value of coops").
- council housebuilding has been slashed - public money for the Housing Corporation (which funds housing associations and many tenant coops) was also cut back by £57m. However, unlike councils, whose borrowing is now tightly restricted, the Housing Corporation has been allowed to raise the money (£50m) directly from the City.
- an overwhelming majority of tenants at Glasgow Council's 'consultative' conference on coops were opposed to them being set up on estates.

In this follow-up article we want to examine why

tenant coops are being encouraged by the government, to question what tenant coops offer and discuss how tenants can gain more control over their housing. It is vital that tenants and action groups considering or being encouraged to set up coops should examine carefully these wider issues, as well as the more local political and personal issues involved.



Tenant coops are currently being promoted in three different situations:

- ★ on council estates - management coops
- ★ in areas of older private housing, e.g. in Housing Action Areas, as an alternative to councils buying houses from private landlords and improving them - part of or linked to a housing association
- ★ where there is a need to provide housing for a specific group of people, e.g. students, single people, etc.

With coops on council estates the ownership of the houses is retained by the council (though see comments later) and the tenants become responsible for managing and maintaining the houses. In other cases the houses are owned either by the coop itself, a housing association or a 'secondary' coop set up to assist the development and provide services to new coops.



## why is the Government pushing tenant Co-ops

There are a number of reasons:-

- ★ tenant coops enable the government and councils to be seen to be doing something about some aspects of tenant control for a few tenants while avoiding doing anything substantial on the same issues for all tenants.
- ★ less than a year after gaining power in 1974, the Labour Government urged councils to save costs by "increasing the degree of responsibility for maintenance borne by tenants" (Circular 171/74). Later the Circular (8/76) which followed publication of the Campbell Report on Housing Cooperatives stated: "Particularly at a time when it is important to use managerial and financial resources more efficiently, and not increase rate or subsidy costs unduly, the introduction of cooperative schemes would be a means of bringing additional personal resources into housing".
- ★ some councils, having found that they can't seem to solve major problems of maintaining estates, repairs, rent arrears, etc., are only too glad to get rid of the responsibility onto tenants.
- ★ tenant coops provide a 'radical' face to the housing association movement, a movement which needs to gain more legitimacy as it is pushed forward as an alternative to council housing and municipalisation.

## the situation now

Tenant coops have to be examined in the context of the current housing situation - the attack on council housing; massive cuts in council house-building, improvement work, repairs, municipalisation; large rent increases; the sale of council houses; the expansion of new forms of tenure and housing associations at the expense of council housing.

By cutting money for council housing, municipalisation and improvement work and at the same time greatly increasing money for housing associations and cooperatives (capital grants to housing associations increased from nil in 1974/75 to £358m in 1977/78), situations are created whereby tenant coops are, or are presented as being, the only opportunity for council and private tenants to improve their housing conditions. It is a classic example of a new restriction being dressed up as a new freedom. There is also an increasing amount of propaganda which puts forward tenant coops as 'a good thing'.



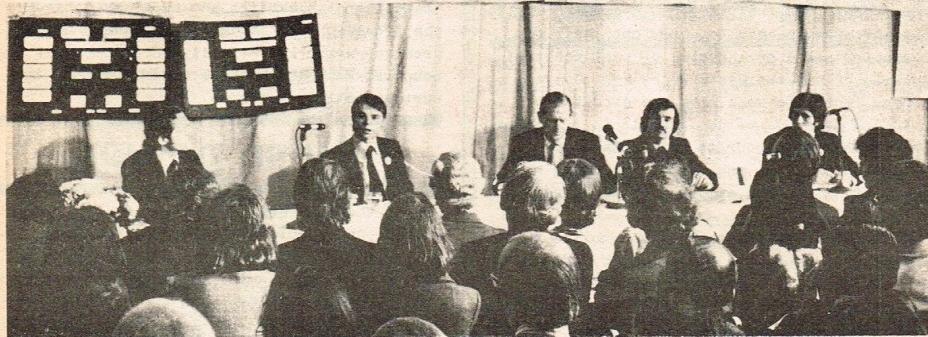
In fact, they can be seen as a 'logical' development in a capitalist system to a number of problems in the current housing situation in Britain.

- many council estates have serious problems as a result of (1) being designed to the whims and desires of architects and planners rather than to tenants' needs; (2) being exploited by private builders, cuts in standards, resulting in badly designed and badly built estates. Tenants and councils are now having to pay for these 'mistakes' and the backlog of repairs. Tenant coops have the 'advantage' of drawing in tenants to try to help to solve these problems.
- new forms of tenure are being pushed to supplement the main alternatives of council housing and owner occupation and to provide 'stepping stones' to the latter, e.g. housing associations, equity sharing (you rent half your house and pay a mortgage on the other half), co-ownership schemes. Cooperatives are an integral part of this developing pattern of alternative tenures. Further the influential Campbell Report on cooperatives states "management cooperatives, where control but not ownership is vested, are an important

halfway stage in convincing people that cooperatives are a workable proposition". Having established coops and the sale of council houses to individual tenants, the next step would be for the Tories or a future Labour government to encourage the sale of estates or groups of houses to coops.

form of political organisation which can be entirely focused around campaigns, deciding their own tactics, action, organisation, etc. which can lead to challenging fundamental aspects of capitalism. In contrast a tenant coop has first and foremost a responsibility to acquire,

## EVEN ROYALTY GETS IN ON THE ACT



Teach-In on Tenants' Co-operatives, 21 November 1974

Platform, left to right: Colin Johnson *Sanford Tenant*, Peter Watherston *SCD Chairman*, Prince Philip, John Hands *SCD Executive Director*, Garth Caswell *Sanford Chairman*

Coops are supported by the Tories and Liberals precisely because they undermine council housing, encourage 'self help' and 'self reliance'. If coops can also be sold freehold so much the better!

● tenants have long fought for more power to influence the planning, building and running of estates. Rather than change the system which affects all tenants and tackle the fundamental issues involved, the State responds to tenants' demands by encouraging tenant coops which can at most affect relatively few tenants and leaves many of the fundamental problems untouched. In short tenant coops are a DIVERSION.

While tenant coops may embody many principles that socialists would support, this does not mean that they should be encouraged or accepted. Their form of organisation may be one which might be adopted within a socialist society (as may tenants associations and action groups) - but that doesn't make them intrinsically "socialist" or necessarily a first step towards socialism. Just as workers' coops have to operate and compete in a capitalist system where the name of the game is to maximise profits and exploit the labour force, so tenant coops have to operate in the wider context of local and national housing policies. More importantly tenant coops don't by their nature challenge in any fundamental way the method and profitability of the financing, land acquisition and building of housing. They are a form of organisation, incorporating some socialist principles - collective responsibility, sharing, etc. - being used to further capitalist aims.

The distinction between a tenants' association and a coop is that a tenants' association is a

manage and maintain (and sometimes build or improve) housing and other property. It can only be involved in campaigns on other issues when it has first carried out these duties.

Tenant coops are set up as a legal entity to handle 'assets' and money under rules and procedures and because of these are more constrained by the capitalist system. (For example, see p19 on the question of rent strikes.) Also part of their time and resources is taken up clearing legal, financial and administrative 'blockages' to make it easier for coops to be set up and to operate.

## there are other ways to get 'control'

As we pointed out in CA No 25, greater 'control' of housing can also be achieved by tenants having the power to influence and instruct the council to carry out their decisions and demands. Tenant coops are only one way of getting control. And control over what? - the home, estate and/or wider policies which may affect tenants in a far more fundamental way than the management of their estate or group of houses. A new form of tenure is not needed in order for tenants to get control.

## who gets control ?

Tenant coops give some form of control to only a relative handful of tenants. The question is

what do they offer for the 6.5 million council tenants and the many private and housing association tenants?

Surely a great deal more control over the home and estate can be achieved for all council tenants by groups campaigning for and obtaining security of tenure; greater freedom to carry out alterations and improvements to their homes; power to choose how their home is decorated inside and out; greater freedom to carry out their own minor repairs based on a system of rent rebates; getting rid of all the petty rules and restrictions; and lastly to work with the direct works and building maintenance departments to fight for adequate money and labour to build new council houses and to maintain and improve existing houses to the satisfaction of tenants and workers.

Council housing must be expanded to provide for general needs. It is the only means by which all working class families will get a decent home at reasonable cost. Council housing must be improved both in terms of its planning and design, i.e. higher standards and more facilities, and its management. Much greater freedom and control is feasible and necessary within a publicly owned housing system. The way ahead is to campaign to get these demands to improve and expand council housing met - not to replace council housing with something else or get embroiled in diversions.

## divide and rule

Tenant coops can only effectively be set up where tenants are willing 'co-operators', that is, they are willing to put time and energy into setting up and running a coop collectively. The government have made it clear (Circular 8/76) that coops should not be set up on "problem estates" nor include tenants with "social problems". Are these tenants and estates to be left to be tomorrow's slums? And what happens to tenants of private landlords who, for reasons of work, health, etc. can't be or don't want to be willing 'co-operators' if, because of the cuts, the main opportunity for tenants to get decent housing is to join a coop?

Coops may 'solve' the housing problems of particular limited sections of the working class, leaving the remainder to fight over the crumbs. The Summerston, Glasgow and Wellington Mills, Lambeth (see CA No 24, p 9) coops show clearly that with selected tenants on selected elite estates coops will create further division and classification of tenants.

## organisational advantages

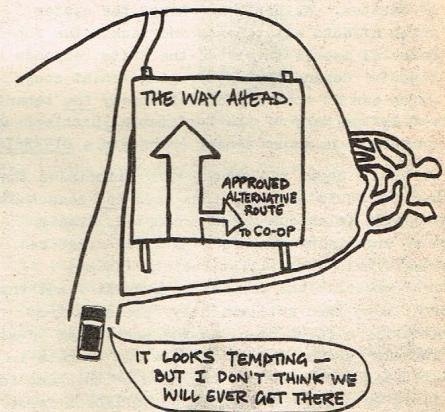
It is often suggested that tenant coops represent a new and in some ways 'better' form of political

organisation than 'ordinary' tenants' associations and action groups, and that involvement in decision making and running the coop helps to raise people's political consciousness. Certainly education is one of the key cooperative principles and some coops, e.g. in Islington, have campaigned against the cuts and on other issues. However, there is a danger that the overall effect of tenant coops will be to educate tenants to understand the complexities and problems relating to the provision and management of their housing - problems which are normally encountered by the council - rather than the wider and much more important political issues.

## less power

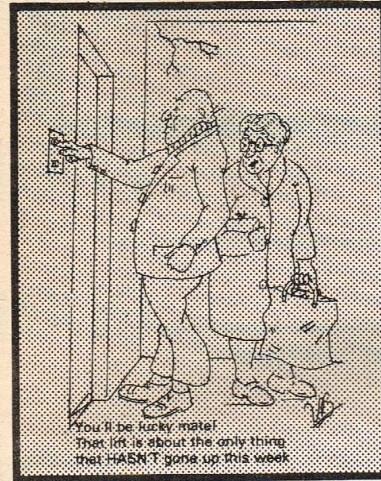
One of the consequences of expanding the role of tenant coops could be the defusion of political action by severely limiting the main economic power that tenants have - the power to withhold rent. The problems outlined below are not problems related to the principles of a coop but stem from the fact that the coop is operating within the existing economic and legal system.

In council owned housing a coop will have a Management Agreement with the council which provides for the coop to act as the council's agent and for a lease to be granted. The situation may well arise during rent struggles, such as those against the Tory Housing Finance Act, when a coop would want to support and take an active part in these campaigns.



Normally a council can take individual tenants to court over rent arrears. However, a coop is placed between the council and individual tenants as a legal entity with contractual obligations to the council. So if the coop members do go on rent strike, the council, or the government, could, if it was politically feasible, take legal action against the coop itself because it was breaking the law and its legal agreement. Then the issue becomes the coop breaking the law and the rents issue takes second place (as in the Clay Cross

struggle against the Housing Finance Act when the main issue became 'councillors breaking the law') If a management coop failed to collect rents (which are paid into a council rent account and the council usually pays an agreed amount to the coop on a regular basis) as provided in the Agreement, the council could legally terminate the agreement and the coop would cease to exist. Coop tenants would revert to being 'ordinary' council tenants but would still be liable collectively for the coop's uncollected rents up to the point it ceased to exist.



Coops established outside council housing would be in a similar position. Coops registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies which took illegal action, e.g. a rent strike, would be threatened with loss of charitable/non-profit status. Those directly registered with the Housing Corporation or linked to a housing association which was registered could be threatened with loss of financial support from the Corporation. Where a coop was retaining all or part of the rent money collected to pay for management and maintenance work it was undertaking, a rent strike would be against the interests of coop tenants.

This situation does not arise with tenants' associations or action groups because they normally are not constituted as legal entities but as political organisations; nor do they have legal agreements with councils. Another danger is that if any tenants, and it would need only one, in a coop were strongly against the coop going on rent strike, they could seek and possibly obtain an injunction restraining the coop as a body from taking any action.

Clearly coops must be seen as a further restriction on tenants' freedom to take direct action. Furthermore, the coop is responsible for collecting and dealing with rent arrears. Coops force the community to act as its own policeman in a situation in which the fundamental economic and political decisions are all taken elsewhere.

As well as getting 'more personal resources into housing' tenant coops set up in the private sector mean much higher rents because, like housing associations' rents, these are fixed by the Rent Officer.

## "There is no other way to get better housing"

For groups of people wanting to live together communally or share one or more houses, a cooperative can be a useful means of achieving this. As we noted above, tenants of private landlords in older housing areas may well see joining or helping to set up a coop as their only means of getting better housing because of the cuts and local authorities' opposition to municipalisation. However, it must be remembered that money used by tenant coops, like housing associations, is public money, so it could be used by the council.

Fighting the cuts and getting an adequate and effective council municipalisation and improvement programme must be the key objective. Of course there are serious problems with the way that council housing is financed, built and managed. But the answer is to confront and fight these problems and not get side-tracked into diversions or setting up alternatives of one kind or another.

## demands

If there is no other alternative but to establish a coop, before it is set up there must be a clear idea of how, if possible, it will be used for the benefit of other tenants and the experience and lessons learnt used to help other working class areas.

If it is set up it should incorporate two very important principles:

- that the local authority owns the houses
- that as public money is involved the coop should aim to use the council's technical services, e.g. architects and the direct works department, rather than use private architects and builders. Also tenants must have the opportunity to be the paid workers in the coop.

In addition

- decisions to set up coops should come from tenants and not be imposed by councils, housing associations, etc.
- coops should not be set up on council estates until:
  - all the backlog of repairs is made up and estates are modernised
  - a proper system of transfers between coops and council estates is established and the grading of tenants abolished
  - there is no discrimination in the selection of tenants.

PART  
1

# ALL THEIR PROMISES



"The Labour Party makes  
no baseless promises."

'LET US FACE THE FUTURE' 1945 MANIFESTO

Do you remember what Labour promised to do about housing in 1945? And what the Tories promised in 1951? At every election the main political parties put forward their Manifesto which they claim is the beginning of the end for the housing crisis. Yet 32 years of 'affluence' still sees no end to it.

Some would say that the promises in Manifestos mean little anyway, but it is these promises that the media seize upon. They are the basis of the Parties' propaganda. They are what the 'floating' voter is either hooked on, or not. The Party Conference may pass left-wing resolution after resolution, but it is the Manifesto the public sees.

Manifestos put forward the general overall strategy which the government and opposition say they will follow. However when in power we all know that things don't get done. Promises are repeated year after year, get dropped, are rephrased and, sometimes, fulfilled.

In this article, the first in a three-part series, we look at the housing policies of the Labour Party - its promises, and the situation now. The second part, in the next issue, will look at the Tories' housing promises; and finally we will assess what these parties have actually achieved in government, and what are the prospects for solving the housing problem under the existing economic system.

1945  
1950

"Housing will be....one of the earliest tests of a Government's real determination to put housing first....a house for every family....centralised purchasing and pooling of building materials....good town planning....Labour believes in land nationalisation." 'LET US FACE THE FUTURE'

"Build a house for everyone....eradicate slums....rent controls....the great adventure of new towns." 'LET US WIN THROUGH TOGETHER'

**1951**

"Build 200,000 new houses a year....and increase when raw materials are available....for rent and not for sale." **'LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO'**

**1955**

"Subsidise houses to let....gradually take over and modernise rent-controlled private property....we shall help those who wish to own their own homes.... give householders the opportunity to buy the freehold." **'FORWARD WITH LABOUR'**

**1959**

"Help people to buy their own homes and ensure an adequate supply of decent houses to let at a fair rent....repeal the Rent Act....reduce interest rates.... some municipalisation....every tenant will have a chance to buy from the council the house he lives in....security of tenure for council tenants." **'BRITAIN BELONGS TO YOU'**

**1964**

"Nationalisation of building land - to make it available at cheaper prices.... lower interest rates....100% mortgages through local councils....repeal the notorious Rent Act....limited municipalisation and modernisation....accelerate slum clearance....build 400,000 houses per year....more rapid use of the new techniques of industrialised building." **'LET'S GO WITH LABOUR'**

**1966**

"A government target of 500,000 houses for 1969/70....office building is now controlled....cheap loans to councils....labour saving and standardisation in house building....special financial relief to selected authorities so that rent increases can be kept within bounds....Home Ownership Plan." **'TIME FOR DECISION'**

**1970**

"A high level of building must continue....rent controls....Home ownership will be further encouraged. For the first time in our history, 50% of the nation's homes are now owner-occupied. We believe that this proportion will rise and should continue to rise....lower interest rates....financial aid to Housing Associations, which have a valuable role to play." **'NOW BRITAIN'S STRONG'**

**Oct.  
1974**

"Repeal the Housing Finance Act....limit rent increases....municipalisation....reduce rates of interest....land for redevelopment will be nationalised.... more municipalisation....more cheaper mortgages....increase council house-building ....public ownership of land will stop land profiteering."

**Feb.**

"Public ownership of development land....end land speculation....help for home-buyers through a new National Housing Finance Agency....local councils' lending will be expanded....restore councils' right to fix rents.... council tenants to have security of tenure....encourage municipalisation.... increase improvements and rehabilitation....increase house building.... abolish the lump." **'BRITAIN WILL WIN WITH LABOUR'**

**THE  
FACTS  
NOW  
THE  
FACTS  
NOW**

900,000 slums and another 1 million without inside toilet, a bathroom or hot water supply

50,000 homeless people applied for accommodation from Councils last year

The latest cuts in new council housebuilding mean that only 100,000 council houses are to be started in England in 1977

Only once since 1945 has the number of houses built in Great Britain risen to more than 400,000 per annum (that was in 1969). Since 1958, the number of houses completed each year in the public sector has consistently been lower than the number of private houses

## THE FACTS NOW

## THE FACTS NOW

## THE FACTS NOW

Interest rates have not come down - an average of 62p in every £1 of council rent goes to pay the interest on money borrowed from the financiers

Councils are now having to pay for the massive and expensive mistake of system building. For example, the Greater London Council has a £38 million repairs programme to remedy major defects due to bad building and design

There were over 1 million families on Councils' waiting lists in England alone last year

Despite the big policy switch in the 1970s from slum clearance and rebuilding to improving older houses, the actual number of houses improved using public money has fallen dramatically under Labour and is planned to go on falling. The improvement programme has received massive cuts since 1975

In the 10 years, 1965 - 75, rents went up faster than both retail prices and household income of manual workers. Rents are now climbing at the same rate as they did in the first year of the Tory Housing Finance Act

Even Labour's promise to support and increase owner occupation by giving council mortgages has now been practically abandoned: councils' home loan schemes have been severely cut back over the last 3 years

## Where have all the promises gone .....

- Some get watered down
- Some disappear completely
- Some new ones appear - when the time is right
- Some get repeated time and time again.



Look at their attitude towards owner occupation and the role of council housing: In 1945 and '50 nothing was said about either; in '51 they said council houses were not for sale; '55 saw their first Manifesto support of owner-occupation; and by '59 they said council houses should be sold off and that owner-occupation was to be encouraged. This shows a complete landslide of compromise over the years. Of course things have advanced tremendously over the last thirty years - but it's not just the quantity, it's the quality as well. Take the plan for nationalisation of land (a basic socialist demand); this was made once in a Manifesto in 1945 and never since. All that has been said subsequently is 'public ownership of building land' ('64, '66, Feb. and Oct. '74) and 'make land available at cheaper prices' ('64) - these measures are basically to support private builders and to encourage owner-occupation. Some change in 'quality'.

There are other unfulfilled promises we could go into (like, where is the security of tenure for council tenants promised in '59?), but that is not the basic question. We should ask ourselves why does the Labour Party have this record in 1977?

Every time Labour gets into power, a recession has hit them and cuts have to be made. And why do cuts have to be made? Because they still try to 'manage' an economic system which is geared to profit and not needs. They do not have the strength to fundamentally challenge the demands of the City, Big Business and the Tories. Promises don't mean anything unless we have the means to fulfill them.

Next issue we see how the **TORIES** measure up, and if they are honest about their intentions.

# Burnley

# FIGHT AGAINST GRADING

At a Public Inquiry in Burnley in January the Group for Little Cornwall objected to the CPO for its area on the grounds that the Council had failed and would fail to provide "suitable alternative accommodation" as required by law. Although these same grounds had been the basis of objections elsewhere, it was the first time that a Public Inquiry had been held because of objections being made on these grounds alone.

## Objection 'invalid'

At first the DoE ruled that the rehousing of clearance area residents was "entirely a matter for the local authority" and that our objection was therefore invalid. Six months later, after we had asked the DoE to clarify the grounds on which an objection is valid, they ruled that "the matter of rehousing is a proper subject of objection" and that there would be an Inquiry after all.

Little Cornwall consisted of three terraces which had a 'village' atmosphere, where families, often consisting of 3 or 4 branches, had lived together in harmony - families whose roots in the area stretched far back into the past. We

use the past tense because, although we are still waiting for the outcome of the Inquiry, one and a half terraces have already been demolished.

## We want the new houses

For nearly 2 years before the Inquiry the Group for Little Cornwall had fought to get Burnley Council to accept the reasons behind their request for a written guarantee of rehousing on the Griffin Field site - an estate that the Council is building on a field right next to the Clearance Area. These reasons were simply that physically the new estate was the only "suitable alternative" to staying in their existing homes and that morally the residents should be allowed to move there because of its close proximity and traditional connections with the Little Cornwall community.

## Community Based Renewal

Along with other areas in the country, we were advocating a policy of local rehousing known as 'Community Based Renewal' or CBR.

CBR is seen by little Cornwall families as a way of alleviating much of the stress, degradation and uncertainty which usually occurs during the clearance process.

A great deal of suffering would not have taken place in our area:

- if people had had written guarantees of rehousing on the Griffin Field estate

- if they had been pre-allocated the new houses so that they could watch their new house being built

- if they had been able to participate in the planning of the estate, or indeed, in any other stage of the clearance process.

Only people who have actually lived in a Clearance Area and watched their friends and neighbours being moved away while they are left alone in fear of vandalism and other menaces, and to be over-run by rodents, can fully appreciate what a traumatic experience it is.

All too often it is the elderly, lonely and infirm who find that they must suffer the consequences of policies operated by the Councils and

officials who disregard the advice in Government circulars.

## Degrading grading

In our opinion the main reason why Burnley Council refused to guarantee local rehousing is that the Housing Department operates a policy of grading prospective tenants into 4 categories, A, B, C, and D, depending on how 'clean' and houseproud they are thought to be. Applicants in grades C and D very seldom get offered new Council housing, so this meant they couldn't be offered one of the new Griffin Field houses. This grading policy is in direct opposition to the Cullingworth Report, published in 1969, which recommended that grading policies should cease. More importantly, we object to the whole idea of grading tenants.

response to one of our reports, the Housing Chairman had made the absurd reply: "If we are not already carrying out (these) recommendations ... then it is not practicable to do them."

All this was the nucleus of our evidence at the Inquiry. All the families who had objected to the CPO were represented there, and we had a witness from the Rocheford Tenants association in the Hunslet area of Leeds where the Council are operating a policy of CBR.

## Council avoids the issue

Burnley Council failed to put forward any evidence on the rehousing issue. Although they knew that all the objections were about the rehousing, they confined their evidence to stating their reasons for making a CPO in

suitable or not was a matter for the Courts and not for the Secretary of State - despite the fact that the DoE had ruled that rehousing was a proper subject for an Inquiry. We had to rely on the strength of our case and on the fact that the DoE could recommend that justice be done.

## We demand Guarantees

In our conclusions we asked the Secretary of State not to confirm the CPO unless the Council were prepared to guarantee Griffin Field houses to the objectors. We also recommended:

that the DoE should send guidance to local authorities on public participation in the clearance process

that local authorities should have a statutory duty to publish their methods of tenant selection

and, most important of all, that some form of legislation should be introduced to make local rehousing and CBR a reality throughout the country.

Documents presented at the Inquiry: Proof of Evidence, 35p; Griffin Field For Us, 15p; Appendices to Evidence, 75p; Written Statements, 15p. Full set £1.40p. All prices include postage. Obtainable from Mrs Beryl Barnes, 124 Sycamore Ave, Burnley, Lancs. Full set for 80p including postage, to action groups and tenants associations.



Another reason for the Council's refusal was their negative attitude to public participation. Earlier the Council had been asked if Clearance Area residents could be involved in the clearance process as recommended in DoE Circular 13/75. The Town Clerk had replied that "whilst such involvement might have theoretical appeal, it is difficult to see what constructive purpose this would serve", and the Council had accepted his advice. In a

the first place - reasons that were not, in any way, in dispute. The Chief Housing Officer was present throughout the Inquiry but did not say a word. We could not cross-examine their witnesses on rehousing because they had none, although we had prepared a number of awkward questions.

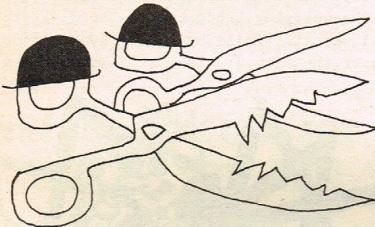
In their summing up, the Council merely said that they considered that the question of whether accommodation was



# HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT COUNCIL CUTS

## ★cuts in services ★cuts in building projects

Most people know that Government policies have led directly to cuts in local public services. Repairs to council houses are taking longer. Roads are swept less often and are not repaired as quickly. Fares and council housing rents are going up. Social Services are being reduced. Class sizes are being increased and teaching facilities cut back.



These cuts are in day-to-day services - in the Council's revenue budget. What is not so obvious is the dramatic cut-back in Councils' capital spending, mainly new building projects like houses, day centres, parks, schools and so on. After all, it is hard to miss what you have never seen. In the country as a whole this kind of new building has been almost halved over the last 4 years.

- Less hope for the old industrial areas, now in desperate need of rebuilding. It will become increasingly difficult to revive inner city industry without renewing buildings, roads, etc.
- Unemployment in the building industry (construction workers are now almost a quarter of the unemployed, though only 10% of the nation's workforce).

## Examine the budget

How do you find out how the Council is cutting its services and its capital spending? One way is to look at the Council's annual budget which comes out in March or April each year. (Councils work to the financial year April to April, so the current year is 1977/8.) It shows revenue and capital spending for past, current and future years. Every Council has a different form of budget but all include sections which show:

General information about the Council's income: how much rates are paid by each sector (shops, offices, houses, etc.); how much the Government gives in its special and Rate Support Grants; how much is paid in rents and charges for services. Usually there is information too about how many employees the Council has in each department - and how many vacancies.

## What these cuts mean

These cuts in capital spending are as important as the immediate revenue cuts to local services. They mean:

- Services will be cut much more drastically in future years since there will be no facilities to provide them.

What have been the successes and failures of cuts campaigns; What should the future strategy be.



How the Labour Government's strategy of cuts and wage restraint is succeeding in boosting private profit.



We will examine these and other issues in detail in the next issue of C/A.

## The Case Against The Social Contract

Discusses the facts and arguments about present wage controls. It examines in question and answer form the various reasons given for present policies not just on wages but on jobs, prices, profits, schools and hospitals.

FULL OF INFORMATION AND  
ESSENTIAL READING

Produced by independent socialists from various factories and workplaces.

10p + 10p post from 31 Gresham Road, Coventry.

TABLE 1

Committee	Probable 1976/7	Estimate 1977/8	Estimate 1978/9	Estimate 1979/80
Administration	£350,000	£390,000	£490,000	£120,000
Finance	£1.5m	£1.8m	£1.8m	£1.8m
Housing Devpt/Management	£31m	£33m	£29m	£26m
Libraries/amenities	£115,000	£400,000	£735,000	£1m
Planning/highways	£400,000	£490,000	£540,000	£619,000
Social Services	£2m	£1m	£1.6m	£700,000
TOTAL	£35.5m	£37.4m	£33.8m	£30.3m



three more years up to 1980-81. Typically a summary will look like this (this is for the London Borough of Hackney). See Table 1

Although in this case estimated spending rises by £1.9m from last year to this, it conceals some very sharp cuts - in particular, for example, the social services capital spending is cut in half. The worrying trend is long term - total capital spending falls by 15% by 1980 and housing is one of the main victims. It falls by over 16%.

## Finding hidden cuts in services

The problem with comparing different years' revenue accounts is that rises in costs hide the real cuts in services. Thus total spending in money terms will rise sharply over the past years. This will probably be more than swallowed up by price rises, interest payment increases and so on - so that in fact the standard of services may actually fall. Comparing revenue spending for different years can show:

- how much increases in spending have gone to pay for rising rates.
- how much the rising spending has been paid out of increased charges, especially rents.
- how much the Government grant is keeping up with inflation (look for the Rate Support Grant totals for different years).
- how much the Council is spending on direct services - especially repairs to its housing equipment (eg, books for libraries, etc.).
- how many staff are being cut (or posts held vacant).

## New building cuts

● Capital spending - mainly on building projects (either new or improvements and loans to housing associations and home buyers). This section is probably the most revealing. It shows what the Council's priorities have been - and how it plans to change them. It is also fairly straightforward. Again each committee has a different section and there will be a summary table of all the committees' spending. There will usually be information on last year's (1976-7) "probable" spending, this year's (1977-8) estimate and estimates for two or



This exercise can be followed through by looking at previous years' Council Budgets. Look at total capital spending. In Hackney's case this looks as follows:

	1974/5	1975/6	1976/7	1977/8
TOTAL	£20.3m	£32.9m	£35.5m	£37.4m
Housing	£13.7m	£22.6m	£31.1m	£33m

(This can be further broken down by each Committee's spending.)

These figures will be in money terms. It is most important to take inflation into account. This can be done by applying the following inflation rates to the figures:

1974/5 to 1975/6 21.1%  
1975/6 to 1976/7 15.3%

(This is from the Building Cost Index supplied by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.)

It is worth noting that Councils don't always spend what they said they would at the beginning of the year. In last year's budget Hackney, for example, estimated it would spend £48m in 1976/7. In the event it spent only £35.5m - as it dutif-

**TABLE 2**

Housing Cttee	1976/7 Probable	1977/8 Estimate	1978/9 Estimate	1979/80 Estimate
New building	19.6m	14.8m	8.9m	5.6m
Properties acquired	5.5m	7.7m	7.85m	8.35m
Improvement Grants	0.275m	0.53m	0.635m	0.55m
Improvement to council housing	2.4m	3.5m	3.5m	2.6m
Housing Associations	3.1m	6.2m	7.5m	8.6m
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31.1m</b>	<b>33.2m</b>	<b>28.7m</b>	<b>26m</b>

ully followed Government instructions to cut. Its estimate of £37.4m for this year, 1977/8, then, has to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Another exercise worth trying is to see how cuts in future estimates have affected the capital programme since 1974. Thus, if we look at the 1975 capital budget report for Hackney, it says the Council will spend £38m in the year 1977-8. By 1976 the Council said it would spend £40m in 1977-8. This year's report has reduced this to £37m. Again these figures are in money terms so the real cuts in programmes are far greater.

## What to look out for

There are drawbacks and problems to watch out for in this method:

- Some councils always put a lot of items in their programmes for 2 years ahead but as it comes closer they move them into later years.
- Some councils don't plan ahead much more than 2 years, so their forward plans can only be illustrative.
- Beware of sudden very large changes. This may arise from programmes being moved from one committee to another. For example, loans to home buyers may be moved from Finance to the Housing Committee.
- Councils deal with inflation in different ways. Many use last year's November price figures as a basis for all their estimates over the next 5 years. A contingency sum is then put into the finance committee's budget to cover inflation. Many local authorities are now cutting back their contingency sums, although inflation is rising. This is likely to lead to reduced flexibility and further cuts during the current year.

## A detailed look at housing cuts

Finally - and in a way more importantly - is to look in detail at how each committee plans its spending because this can show exactly which projects will go ahead and which have been cut or postponed. Although this can look daunting at first, there is enough information to make a bit

of work worthwhile. Let us first look at the key items of a housing committee's spending. Again, this is for the London Borough of Hackney:

### See Table 2

This shows the shape of the Council's housing strategy (and exactly the same analysis can be made of other committees). Points that emerge from this council's plans;

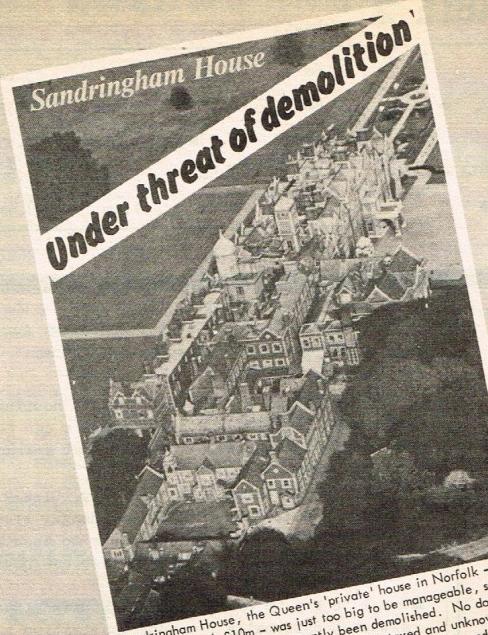
- Money for new homes falls off very quickly from nearly £20m to £6m by 1980. One danger sign is when councils stop spending money to acquire land - the first stage in building new houses.
- Money to buy up private rented houses rises, although nationally the municipalisation budget has been cut. However, the rise of £3m in no way makes up for the £14m cut from new building.
- There is very little change in the money going to improve pre-war and acquired council housing. Moreover it is, at £2.3m, already very low. Nearby Islington, with fewer old council houses, spent some £19m last year on improvement.
- Housing Associations get the only large increase in funds - nearly trebling to £9m by 1980. Again this is a political choice about who spends the money. (In Hackney's case this very large increase may not be unconnected with its leader's recent appointment as head of the Housing Corporation.)

## On the move

More detailed breakdown of a committee's plans shows exactly which schemes are scheduled and how much they are expected to cost. In this way it is possible to see what priority the Council gives to a local project. For example, if a community centre is planned for 1979, a local campaign could be undertaken to bring it forward - or at least to commit the Council to the project. For projects have a way of being moved back so that they are always just out of reach.

Studies like these can be a very effective propaganda tool to confront councillors and others who blandly say - often on the basis of rising revenue spending - that there are no cuts. Information gained can be used for leaflets both for community organisations and public sector trade unionists fighting the cuts.

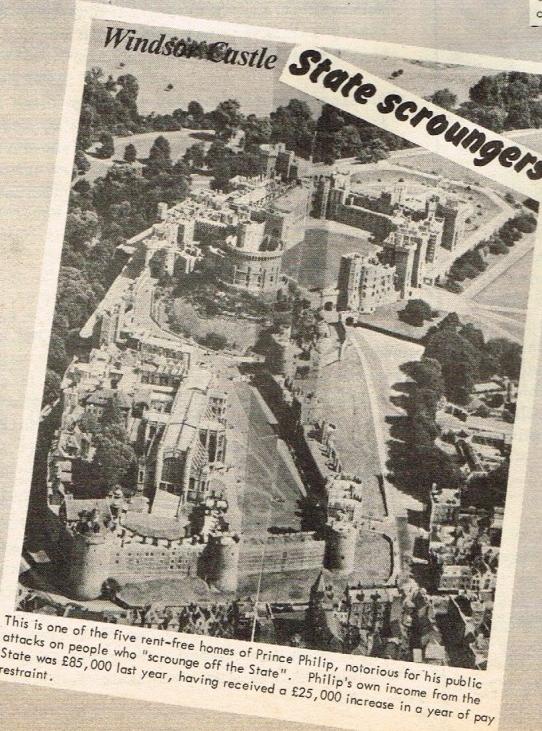
# "MY HO



Sandringham House, the Queen's 'private' house in Norfolk - said to be worth £10m - was just too big to be manageable, so 90 of its 360-odd rooms have recently been demolished. No doubt this sensible step was paid for out of the untaxed and unknown private income she reaps from the 20,000 acres of farm and park land on the Sandringham Estate. And presumably, her rate bill to the local council will be reduced now that the house is smaller!



Balmoral, with its acres upon acres of heather and woodland, its rivers and nearby lochs, is the perfect place to relax. The Queen can ride for miles each morning with little chance of meeting anyone. Prince Edward can learn to drive a car on the private roads, as his brothers did, and Prince Andrew can sail with friends, play golf on the private course, or see a film in the Castle's own cinema. (from "Jubilee")



This is one of the five rent-free homes of Prince Philip, notorious for his public attacks on people who "scrounge off the State". Philip's own income from the State was £85,000 last year, having received a £25,000 increase in a year of pay restraint.

## The Jubilee Song

My husband and I would like to say on behalf of the British nation  
We do declare you plebs out there are lacking motivation!  
At Heathrow and Port Talbot they're picketing the gate  
Undermining liberties and challenging the State  
And since the footballs over and Stage Three's wearing thin  
I felt the need this year to elevate the British chin

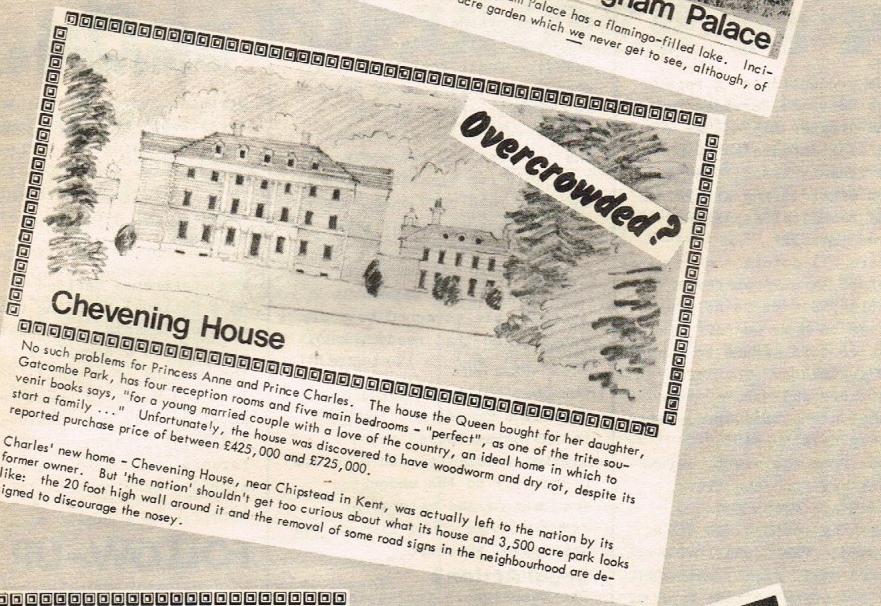
So I phoned my Aunts and cousins, and an army chief or two  
Invited Lords and Ladies and fetched Phillip from the loo  
We gathered at the Palace and palled over Port  
And here's a sort of synthesis of what we said and thought

We all know Britain's sinking, our productive growth is slow  
We need to cheer the country with some carnival or show  
Well I've got this Coronation dress, said I, with matching shoes,  
I've ruled for a quarter of a century now, well give a year or two  
So let's have a celebration with flags and fancy frill  
And I wonder if young Anne could forget her Royal pill  
Anniversaries and babies will solve this mess we're in  
So mobilize the monarchy and let the show begin

CHORUS: It's the Jubilee, the Jubilee  
Join a splendid spending spree  
And celebrate the Monarchy  
Jubilee, the Jubilee  
Do you believe the Jubilee?

# USES AND

I »



So we trained the Royal corgies to fly the high trapeze  
And dive into a vat of boiling cabbages with ease  
And Anne and Mark did better and received a sudden thrill  
For I'd slipped some Haltiborange in Anne's bottle of the Piff!

## CHORUS

It all seemed successful in a funny sort of way  
And business men made millions from their mugs and plastic trays  
The people quite enjoyed it and there's Christmas fairly soon  
I suppose I kept them happy while they waited for the boom

So if your friends are homeless and your dad is on the dole  
Give thanks to the Monarchy and especially to her Majesty  
For her tranquilizing role.

## CHORUS



# NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

## NATIONAL HEAT METERING ACTION CAMPAIGN

The campaign, which was set up last November (see C.A.s no. 29 and 30), recently held its fourth meeting in Rochdale. The most important developments reported by the groups present were:

**1** The production of a report by the Consumer Services Dept. of the Greater Manchester Council, commissioned by Longsight Tenants Assoc. The report makes strong criticisms of the technical aspects of Clorius 'meters'. They are all points that tenants concerned have known for a long time, but it is helpful for them to have an 'official' report of this nature to back their arguments. The local councillors and M.P. are now getting on the bandwagon, saying they have supported tenants from the start, which is some way from the truth, but they are backing an approach by the T.A. to the Ombudsman. The Council as a whole is still firmly entrenched, not wanting to lose face in the light of increasing public debate on the subject; but the T.A., after repeated rebuffs by the Housing Committee, has taken the matter into their own hands and removed about 700 'meters' from 100 houses. The surcharges threatened by the council in retaliation have yet to be imposed.

### Meter use stopped

**2** Tenants in Crewe, armed with information from the campaign, have won their fight to have the use of Clorius 'meters' stopped.

**3** Besides the BRE report (which may take 18 months to two years to be published), the National Consumer Council will be publishing a report in late autumn on heat metering with particular reference to Clorius.

### The broader campaign

These reports are focussing on the technical problems. The Campaign feels that the social aspects of this form of metering reveal further strong arguments for its withdrawal. The 'meters' are extremely difficult for tenants to read; they are read only once a year, so that tenants have little idea of whether they will be facing a huge bill or a rebate from their weekly payments! 'Meters' are attached to every radiator so that readers have to go all through the house. The possibility of legal action under the Trades Descriptions Act os being looked into. Clorius sales literature refers frequently to the undoubted accuracy of the meters, an assumption we would like to see them prove in court.

### Legal Action?

The Campaign is increasingly getting requests for information from groups in areas where Clorius is operating and from local authorities. The articles in Community Action have been very useful in this respect. So, while the fight continues to get the 'meters' removed from the original groups' estates, we have also had some effect in preventing their installation in other places. For further information contact Chris Johnson, M/C Area Resource Centre, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 3AW. 061-236-1117.

## National Standing Conference of Tenants

Representatives of tenants' associations and federations in council housing met in London on Saturday, April 30th to set up a new National Movement to campaign for a better deal for tenants.

The conference decided to set up a National Standing Conference of Tenants' Organisations and elected a committee from the regions of England, Scotland and Wales to press tenants' demands upon national and local government. The conference decided to campaign around a genuine tenants' charter.

## FOLLOW-UP

A national committee was elected from the regions and mandated to draw up further proposals for the Charter in consultation with local groups, to organise a recall conference in the autumn drawing in further tenants' organisations, and to stimulate the setting up of associations on every estate in the country.

National Standing Conference of Tenants  
c/o National Consumer Council  
18 Queen Anne's Gate  
London SW 1. tel: 01 930 5752

# NURSERY campaign

news from  
around the  
country



## fighting FOR UNDER-5's Pt. 3

### ABERDEEN

In Aberdeen, as elsewhere, the cuts are biting, the axe wielded by a Tory dominated Grampian Regional Council. On the 20th December 1976, the Education Committee decided not to staff four new purpose-built nursery schools, one of which is situated in the Bridge of Don area in the north of Aberdeen and designed to cater for 60 kids. This area is the main housing expansion area for the city - much of the development is private, and while houses shoot up, community facilities, and shops remain non-existent. The need for a nursery school is deeply felt, particularly as most of the people moving into the area are young married couples with young children.

On the 16th February, a few of the mothers got together to launch a campaign to have the nursery school staffed. They started a petition, contacted the Press, and wrote letters to the Education Committee. In the weeks that followed, support came from Aberdeen Trades Council, and some local union branches.

### Support scotched

However, vested interests and a few shrewd members of the Education Committee combined to scotch the campaign before it could properly get off the ground and spread support through the whole area. A week after the campaign launching had been splashed by the Lord Thomson-owned local papers, who had only been too happy not to report on the Council's spending budget which incorporated a number of cuts, the Education Committee Convenor invited the campaign to send a deputation to its next meeting on March 8th - a well-timed move, ensuring that there would not be enough time for the campaign to organise further action. The Regional Branch of the Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Assoc. unsuccessfully attempted to woo the mothers from their demands.

But in spite of the fact that the petition raised 413 names from only one small area in the Bridge of Don, with the names of 173 kids of nursery school age, the Tory members were able to outvote demands to have their decision not to staff the school reconsidered. Understandably, the mothers went away disillusioned, unwilling to try further action.

A fatal mistake had been to contact the Press; publicity had allowed the vested interests to move in, and had allowed the Education Committee to pre-empt the campaign. The school is still empty; the issue is still very much alive in the area, and a performance of CounterAct's 'The Double Shift', to be followed by a public meeting, has been arranged in the area to get folk together to discuss possible action.

Some contact addresses for campaigns in Aberdeen:  
Aberdeen Campaign Against the Cuts, c/o M.Vallance,  
163, King Street, Aberdeen (Tel: 0224 29669).  
Aberdeen Trades Council Sub-Committee on the Cuts,  
Secretary, K. Paterson, 1, Aloyn Place, Aberdeen.  
(Tel: 0224 29901).

Aberdeen are still carrying on, as they say. The next article from Brent highlights the point in Aberdeen's campaign which perhaps were not strong enough. It is important to get more than vocal support from Trade Unions and Trades Councils and to have more than one string to your bow. A petition is a momentary advantage but is easily ignored and forgotten. As for the Press - well it is very difficult to get any helpful reporting so it's best not to rely on the Press for your publicity. Again if your campaign is strong enough, the Press shouldn't be able to destroy you.

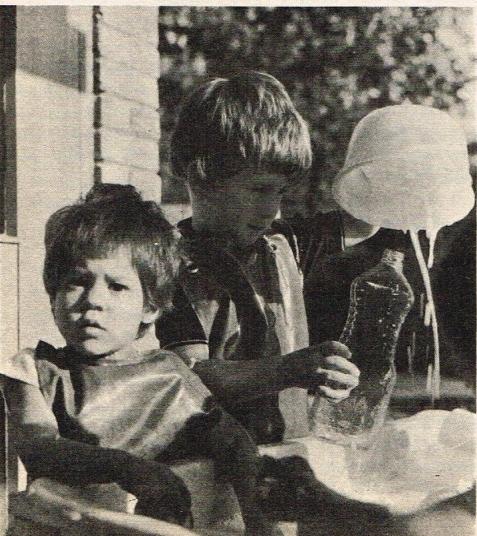
# Brent

Brent Nursery Campaign, one of many Nursery Campaigns in London, has recently had a considerable success in defending 5 proposed Nursery Classes.

Our council had been offered a further loan sanction of £195,000 for these classes, as part of their Nursery Education Building Programme for 1976/77. This additional offer was made because take up of such loans by other local authorities was so low. However, Brent's Labour Group (the majority on the council who decide policy) voted against taking up this loan as they felt that the Interest Payments would put too great a burden on the ratepayers and that the additional expense of equipping and maintaining the classes would be too costly.

## Union backing

When we heard of this decision we produced a leaflet giving the facts and also publicising an open meeting to discuss action against these cuts. At the open meeting the campaign gained the support of the Trades Council, the Working Women's Charter, some Parent Teacher Associations and other individuals. It was decided to launch into a large publicity campaign about the £195,000, using the local press and getting as many groups and individuals to bully and lobby their councillors. Pickets were held outside the Town Hall before meetings and two delegations were organised to the Education General Services Sub-committee and the Labour Group. On each occasion the delegation consisted of a member of the Nursery Campaign, the Trades Council and the Labour Party Young Socialists. In addition, we gained the support of the NUT, other Teachers Associations and the Federation of Tenants Associations.



So much interest was stimulated through this campaign that the decision of the Labour Group was reversed and they voted unanimously to take up the £195,000 loan.

This campaign highlighted several issues of significance which other campaigns may find useful:

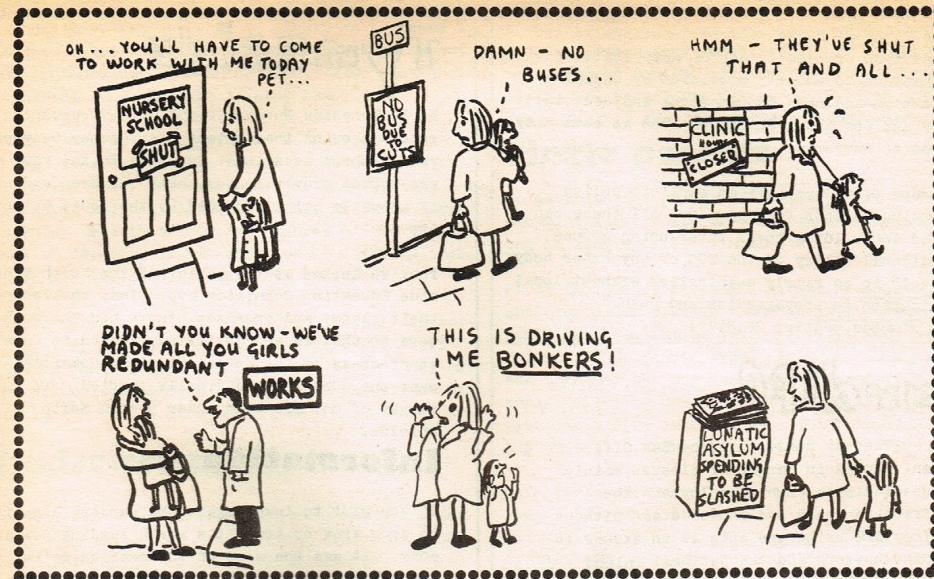
**1** A small committed group of people can, by gaining the support of the Labour Movement, Women's Groups and community organisations, muster up an enormous campaign to successfully oppose cuts in nursery provision and can, at the same time, gain useful contacts for future campaigns.

The campaign to defend the 5 nursery classes was initiated by Brent Nursery Campaign which is a small group comprised mainly of mothers, some employed some not, who came together because of their frustration at the lack of child care facilities in Brent. At the open meeting it was agreed that collective action from a broad base of local groups and Trade Unions would be the only effective way to challenge the Labour Group's decision. This proved to be true, for the Labour Group were clearly swayed by this show of collective strength.

**2** Fighting cuts in nursery provision can also raise wider fundamental issues about the forms and quality of child care and the needs of women and working people. This can therefore provoke a greater awareness within a local authority.

Brent Nursery Campaign had from the outset seen the issues of the 5 classes in much wider terms - i.e. to ensure the basic right of all children to free access to pre-school facilities and to ensure the right of women to also lead a life outside the home. We were fiercely opposed to Brent council's decision to yet again make cuts at the expense of the under 5s. We see nursery education as a valuable caring and stimulating form of pre-school provision, which provides a vital start in life which should be strongly defended. The campaign was, however, conscious of the limitations of nursery education provision, as opposed to the longer hours of Day Nurseries. We felt that in defending the 5 classes we had to broaden the issue to look at the usefulness of all nursery facilities for women and working parents, consequently questioning priorities of the areas chosen for the planned classes. By raising these wider issues we forced the Labour Group to recognise the vital importance of nursery provision and the priority of full day care - enough for them to spend an entire meeting discussing this issue! Such was previously unheard of. Moreover, the Labour Group did change the location of the planned classes to better meet the needs of working parents.

**3** Brent Nursery Campaign was encouraged by the response of their Trades Council. We urge all campaigns to gain the vital support of their



Trade Unions and Trades Councils. Force them to take a stand on the need for more nursery provision - many of them are parents. Under 5s should no longer be a side issue, outside the work place.

It is significant of most nursery campaigns that the initiative has been taken by women, many with under 5s who are unemployed by their circumstances and who face considerable problems fighting cuts whilst not being part of the Labour Movement. Under 5s' provision has no doubt remained a marginal issue as it involves those unable or least able to organise and fight through the Trade Union structure, i.e. unemployed women, working mums and unorganised nursery workers, etc.

## London

### INTER-UNION WORKSHOP ON UNDER 5s

With the help of the London Nursery Campaign an Inter-Union workshop has been set up in London to bring together all the nursery campaigns and the unions which cover nursery workers in local authority Social Services and Education. The Departments could cover workers in the voluntary sector.

Local authorities don't themselves actually provide for anything more than a fraction of the need for nursery provision. They rely on local voluntary projects and on expensive private nurseries to fill some of the gaps. Up till now workers in these 2 sectors have been kept apart and seen their interests as conflicting. However with local authorities now cutting nursery schools and classes, under-5s workers are getting together.

## Campaigns & Unions meet

At the first meeting 8 borough nursery campaigns came as well as rank and file members of NUT, NALGO, NUPE and T&GWU. The issues that came up were:

- \* how to recruit under-5s workers to the unions?
- \* mobilisation of under-5s workers within the unions.
- \* approaches to and content of training courses.
- \* if one union for all - which one?

However the only union which bothered to send a full-time official was NUPE. He argued that under-5s provision should be an issue for the Trade Union movement. Ideally under-5s workers should be in the same union but NUPE would be in favour of local inter-union committees of under-5s workers to start with.

Not only local authorities but the Labour Party, TUC and unions themselves are drawing up policies for under-5s. There will have to be joint action on these if they are to reflect the demands of people working in the field and campaigning for the right of every child under 5 to full-time nursery care.

## TUC Working Party

The TUC has set up a working party to examine the present state of education and care facilities for under-5s and rumour has it that the TUC may well opt for child-minding, as has the Labour Party, as the only feasible type of provision. The London Nursery Campaign don't agree with this and see this sort of report as playing into the hands of local authorities.

## Tyneside

North Tyneside Nursery Campaign have produced a report showing the serious discrepancy between what mothers need in N. Tyneside in the way of pre-school provision for their children and what is actually being provided by the local authority.

They've looked at the policy of the North Tyneside Education Committee over time, challenged their claims and promises, shown how the cuts were brought in and justified, looked in detail at progress by the Social Services Committee over one nursery; and finally carried out a survey of mothers with under 5's in North Shields.

### Information

If you want to investigate the nursery situation in your area or town it's worth sending for a copy. It was the sort of information we've shown how to collect in the magazine (see the last issue and p25 of this issue). Using this information on Government white papers, Party manifestos, council capital expenditure budgets over time, statements by councillors and committees, press articles, they show that N. Tyneside has dragged its feet, delayed and cut its nursery programme whenever possible.

Their survey has started to find out what N. Shields women think about under-5 provision and what they want to see happening. The campaign can then fight for under-5 provision suitable for N. Shields.

Write to: 59 Valley Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear.

Price £1.00

50 p for housewives or unemployed people.

## Cardiff

The day nursery in the Tax Office at Llanishen is in danger of closure, mainly because with such high unemployment the Tax Office can pick and choose staff without kids. They are using the cuts as an excuse to close the nursery and the National Inland Revenue staff organisation is fighting this. The employers suggest "less costly forms of day care" i.e. parents finding their own childminders!

## Glasgow

There's been a three week long occupation by a tenant's association, mothers and supporters in an old school, scheduled to open as a nursery 2 years ago. The occupation ended (sadly?) when the Council opened the school as a day-centre BUT the mothers have to run the nursery themselves!!!

\* There's a Save Our Nurseries Campaign in Glasgow to fight closures and redundancies in nurseries.

## HOW TO COLLECT INFORMATION

### Working Mothers & Single Parent Families

It can be useful in a day-care campaign to have an estimate of the number of children in single parent families and/or with working mothers in your area. If the number of day-care places, including day nursery and registered child minder places falls short of this figure, then you have a basic estimate of the number of children in the most urgent need.

Around this figure a campaign can demand an immediate programme from the local authority. The programme should be based on prefabricated buildings and conversion of houses into day-care facilities. A further demand for a longer term programme should be based on the numbers of women who will inc-

reasingly go out to work while their children are

### Urgent need for day-care

There are two reasons for attempting to estimate in a local area the number of children under five who have a working mother and/or a single parent.

1. This grouping represents the most urgent need as far as provision is concerned.
2. To combat the divide and rule techniques offered by penny-pinching policy makers.

A local day-care campaign is likely to be faced by the assertion that what they are demanding is not what mothers really want or need. Also that children need their mothers to stay home.

Rather than waste our time on such arguments it is a good idea to confront people's prejudices with reality - i.e., that women are already working for financial and social reasons, that many are single parents, and that the consequences of the present lack of day-care is exploitation at work and inadequate and sub-standard care for children.

Single parents are not only more likely to be working, they are also the only group to whom officialdom acknowledges any responsibility on day-care. The acknowledgement is likely to be verbal not practical.

## Under-estimates

Reasons why official estimates of mothers working will normally be too low include: fears that they would lose their social security benefits if they say they are working; also fears about the effect on their husbands' tax; fear about working without cards.

Women with children often work where they are not given insurance cards - cleaning offices, sweatshops in the garment industry, small shops and caterers, as well as the notorious "homework" or "outwork".



## Married women working

To get the 1971 Census estimate of married women working in a local area you need the 1971 Census Small Area Statistics (Ward Library): 10% Sample Census: Column 24. "Hours of Work of Women in Employment". Under this column (which looks like

a table) will be found married women working with children under five years. Multiply by ten to get the estimate for the local population. Then multiply by 1.4 to get the number of children involved. These figures are inevitably an underestimate.

## Single parents

To estimate the number of single parent families we can make an estimate of children and parents living in single parent families.

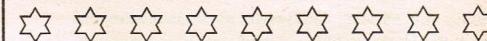
First the number of single parent households with children under five is found in 1971 Census: Small Area Statistics (Ward Library) 100% Sample: Column 20, "Household type". In this table you can add together the numbers of households with one adult (male) or one adult (female) and having children under five years (0-4). Multiply by 1.4 to get the total number of children under five.

This table does not include the single parent families living in other people's households. To get these go back to 1971 Census: Small Area Statistics 10% Sample Census and look at Column 25: Nos of families with dependent children. Add up all those under the heading "lone parent"; and multiply by ten.

Now go back to 1971 Census: Small Area Statistics: 100% Sample: Column 20: "Household type". Add together all the households which consist of one adult (male) or one adult (female) and children. Take from this the number who only have children 0-4 (see above). This will give you the proportion of single parents which have no children 0-4. Take this proportion away from the figure for "Nos. of families with dependent children" - Lone Parents and you are left with the total of single parent families who have children under five years: multiply by 1.4 to get the number of children under five involved.

## Illegitimate births

The minimum way that we can estimate the number of single parent families is to look at the "Registrar General's Annual Returns" on Births, which will include the numbers of illegitimate births in the local area.



Community Action can obtain for groups further help on working out the figures. Send letters requesting help to C/A, marked "Nursery Campaigns", PO Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ. See page 39 for where to get Census Information.

Thanks to Liz McGovern

In C/A no.30, p.27 we showed how to find out the number of nursery places provided in the next issue we will have more information.

# LETTERS



## Nursery Campaigns

Dear Community Action

I see that Community Action is campaigning for Day Nurseries. How can this be?

Community Action depends on support from confident, articulate, well-adjusted people - people who know who they are, and what they stand for. Not from people who as young children became confused about their own identity, as a result of being "mothered" by a rapidly changing succession of adults. A report recently published in the PPA magazine "Contact" tells of a state nursery where in the space of six months, one baby was looked after by sixteen different care-givers.

No one wants to be marooned day in, day out in a tower block with a baby, or a toddler. No wonder mothers get frustrated and lonely, and look to going out to work as a release. If mothers want to get out to work because they're lonely and frustrated, let's tackle the loneliness and frustration. Let's get together and enable them to meet each other in mother and toddler groups, or in play groups, and use their own energy and initiative in taking part in running these groups.

If mothers have to go out to work for economic reasons, let's work on the economic scene so that they don't need to dump their babies. Babies aren't parcels, they're people. What about a bit of community action for the rights of the most inarticulate minority of all, the under-threes?

Margaret Hanton, Chairman of Communications and Media Committee, Pre-School Playgroups Association (England), 8 Gilkes Crescent, London SE21 7BS

## Our reply....

We have had 2 letters - from both the English and Scottish Preschool Playgroups Association - both echoing each other so closely that we are only printing one. Both articles came by

coincidence at the same time as the article from Aberdeen (see p31) in which a reference to the PPA is made. The Scottish PPA actively discouraged women from a campaign to have local nursery schools staffed.

The PPA, as shown in these letters and in their AGM address, have a hostile attitude to nursery schools on the grounds that state care = institutional care and that unless children have a mother around them all day they will be permanently 'damaged'. Do they have to drag up such an out-of-date, highly discredited argument which is such an insult to all the caring, aware, hard worked nursery workers in the country? And the evidence they give us for the near-maltreatment of children in state nursery schools was collected by their own organisation.

## Nursery schools attacked

No bad thing, you may say, if the PPA really is concerned for the needs of children (unlike members of nursery campaigns!) In the AGM address of their chairperson, the PPA maintained that parents and children should be given choice in the type of care they have. Coupled with this comes a blistering attack on nursery schools and a belief that:

"in places where parents have shown willingness to provide for their own children PPA calls upon local authorities to stop building nursery units."

PPA says that money should be spent on voluntary projects (like PPA groups) and on training parents to look after their children better. This seems to say two things - one is that choice would be limited to the type of provision that excludes working parents and is voluntary, and two, that parents don't know what's best for their kids. We strongly disagree with both of these ideas.

## Misses the point

It is a misrepresentation of our articles and the aims of nursery campaigns to say they don't consider the needs of kids. We outlined several self-help projects, we gave contacts for help in setting them up. The demands of campaigns for full funding, staffing, training and equipping of 'voluntary' projects are there because we do care about kids and don't see that they or their parents should get inadequate care. We do believe that there should be a range of full-time care available to every child - so parents can choose:

- whether to use it
- what type of care suits them and their child.

The PPA policy would restrict choice, not create it. Not every parent wants to and few can look after children in a playgroup setting

continued on next page

# REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

**THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY ACTION** Jan O'Malley, Spokesman Books, from bookshops £2.50

Analysis of the struggles of working class groups in Notting Hill particularly those fighting in housing campaigns. Examines the strengths and weaknesses of community struggles, the organisation and strategies adopted. We will have a fuller review in the next issue.

**SECRET RENT ACT 1977** 20p +10p post from CACTL, 6 Bowden St, London SE 11.

Trespass to most people means squatting, but the Part 2 proposals of the Criminal Law Bill could have disastrous effects for council tenants, licensees and other tenants. This pamphlet argues that the proposals are so severe that they constitute a new Rent Act. ESSENTIAL READING  
SUPPORT THE CACTL CAMPAIGN. ORGANISE NOW TO STOP THESE PROPOSALS BECOMING LAW.

**AN END TO PRIVATE LANDLORDISM** from Benwell CDP, 85 Adelaide Ter. Newcastle upon Tyne 4.

Examines the underlying problems in the private rented sector in Tyne and Wear. Argues strongly for the rapid removal of private landlordism by a massive expansion of municipalisation.

## SHARING A JOB?

A group of women are doing some research on part-time work and job sharing, initially for the Association of Community Workers Conference in June. We hope this might be built up into a charter of demands for part-time workers. Anyone who is interested in participating in this project should contact Adrienne Boyle - 01-701-6763 (home), 01-692-8068(work). In particular we would like to hear from anyone who is sharing a full-time job or has negotiated special part-time conditions of employment.

continued from page 36

all day - men and women have a right to work. They may enjoy it which seems to be a thought which doesn't cross the PPA's mind:  
"the percentage of working mothers ... reflects a search for companionship and the respect of society ..!"

Children need a range of social relationships and parents have rights. If the PPA really cares about these it will work with nursery campaigns - not undermine them and actively discourage them. Many local PPA people do work with nursery campaigns and recognise that parents know the benefits of care for their kids. Let's hope they resist what is a divisive and reactionary move from the national organisation.

**IN OUR LIVERPOOL HOME**, unpriced from Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service, 14 Castle Street, Liverpool L2 0NJ (tel: 051-236 7728).

This is the collective response by community organisations in Liverpool to the Inner Areas Study Summary Report. 400 people in 20 community and other groups were involved in criticising the IAS policies for the City, and putting forward alternative proposals on housing, jobs, education, social services etc. The report is a challenge to local and central government to "come and discuss the issues with us".

**DO OFFICES CREATE WEALTH? THE MYTH OF THE RATES ARGUMENT** Price 25p inc. post from North Southwark Community Development Group, 108 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 (Tel: 01 928 8165)

Explodes the myth that major commercial developments are, through the rates, a vital means of financing Council Services. Using the example of Southwark, where there has been spectacular office development, this clear and convincing report shows the benefits to be minimal, especially compared with the social costs involved. (See also Offices: A local treasure trove? in Community Action No 28, pp 22-23)

**TENANT CO-OPS** 20p from Holloway Tenant Co-op, 107 Tollington Way, London N7.

Draws together some of the experience of coops in Islington with general comments about the advantages of coops. Avoids many of the political and economic fundamentals.

## THE GREAT SALES ROBBERY

This 20 page illustrated pamphlet is sponsored by 35 tenants federations, Trades Councils, Cutty Campaigns, and local Labour Parties. The pamphlet covers not only the sale of existing council houses but also the sale of land earmarked for council housing to private builders, equity sharing and build-for-sale schemes. The pamphlet explains -

- Why council housing is so important
- Why all sales must be stopped
- Who's demanding the sale of council houses
- Sales campaigns around Britain
- Action by tenants and workers

### PRICE

1 copy	6p	- plus 9p post
10 copies	55p (save 5p)	- plus 29p post
25	£1.25p (save 25p)	- plus 70p post
50	£2.40p (save 60p)	- plus 85p post
100	£4.70p (save £1.30)	plus £1.10 post

FROM SCAT, 31 Clerkenwell Close,

London EC1 (Tel. 01-253 3627)

# REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

**WASTED ASSETS: EMPTY HOUSES IN HIGHFIELDS AND SPINNEY HILLS.** 15p + post, from Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project (SHARP), 13 Welford Road, Leicester.

Results of survey taken last summer showing 4½% of the houses were empty. Recommends that Leicester Council should reconsider its decision not to buy empty houses, start a 'North Wiltshire' temporary leasing scheme, and draws some conclusions about the effects of Building Societies' "Red Lining" policies.

**THE CLAIMANTS WHO STAYED IN THE COLD** published by Merseyside Right to Fuel Action Group. Price 35p inc. p&p from 88(a) Hill Street, Toxteth, Liverpool 8 (tel: 920 7900 daytime, 928 3203 - Nigel Godfrey).

Alarming case histories that illustrate the failure of liaison arrangements between Fuel Boards and DHSS in maintaining fuel supplies to social security claimants. It concludes that merely improving the liaison is insufficient - more money should be made available for more groups of people (not just claimants) who at present suffer disconnection of fuel supplies, and Fuel Boards should not have the power to disconnect supplies.

**CITIZENS RIGHTS NOTES** available from Newham Rights Centre, 309, Barking Rd, East Ham London E6. Price £8 (incl.p+p), although the price can be negotiated if you are hard up.

A set of notes intended to provide the non-lawyer with an increased knowledge of the principle areas of welfare law. They cover a number of legal topics eg: housing, welfare benefits, matrimonial, sex discrimination, consumer and individual employment rights etc. Comprehensive and practical, though since they were designed to complement an actual course on citizens rights, they do have a rather narrow perspective when read on their own if you are a non-lawyer. The emphasis is on enforcement of rights and what can be done within the letter of the law.

**THE CUTS BULLETIN** 5p + post from WACU, 92 Orchard Street, Worcester.

Contains information on cuts in Worcestershire in Social Services and Education, a brief explanation of where money for the country's services comes from and goes to, information about the declared profits of large companies and banks, and editorial comment on the Social Contract.

## CONFERENCE OF COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Last October the first national conference of alternative newspapers was held in Leeds, organised by Leeds Other Paper. It provided a valuable forum for exchanging views and experiences, as well as working towards a broad definition of 'alternative papers' (we didn't reach any conclusions!). For many people it was the first contact made with other people attempting similar tasks in different parts of the country, and it was felt important to follow up this contact with a further conference in the summer.

The Bristol conference will be on July 2nd-3rd, at the University Settlement, Barton Hill, Bristol. Please note the change of date - not June 17th-19th as announced in the last issue.

The fee for each delegate will be £3 (£2.50 for claimants).

### Provisional Agenda

General Session. Introduction of the different papers represented, discussion based on documents from different papers, possibly a main speaker.

### Workshops

- 1 Our role in the current political framework - eg the rise of the ultra-right, the present Labour Government etc.
- 2 Editorial Policy.
- 3 National Communication and Co-ordination.
- 4 Printing/Production.
- 5 Finance.
- 6 Distribution.
- 7 The Law: libel laws, registration as a paper/business, forming limited companies etc.
- 8 Women's issues.
- 9 The Trade Union Movement.
- 10 Housing.

Report back from workshops. Discussion of resolutions, if any. Decision about future conference.

Further information from Bristol Voice, 46 Richmond Road, Bristol 6 (Tel: Bristol 40491).

## Playleader wanted

BIRMINGHAM - Community-based Adventure Playcentre requires a full-time playleader.

Some experience with children in either teaching or playleading context essential.

For further details please apply to The Secretary, Malvern Street Adventure Playground Association, 120 St. Pauls Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12.

## BROADSIDE FULL TIME WORKER

We need a SOCIALIST JOURNALIST to work with the existing editorial group on articles and distribution.

A PAID job for up to one year.  
Write or phone for details.

## Socialist Music

A SOCIALIST FESTIVAL OF MUSIC is to be held on 28 May at the Battersea Arts Centre.

The festival won't just be a series of musical performances. It's also planned as a kind of conference, with each 'concert' followed by an open discussion on particular aspects of the relationship between socialism and music.

Tickets are available in advance at £1.50 each. Postal orders should be made out to Battersea Arts Centre and sent to:

MAY 28 BOOKING  
Battersea Arts Centre  
Lavender Hill  
London SW11

Creche available.

## LIE OF THE LAND

COMMUNITY LAND ACT: LAND NATIONALISATION BETRAYED.

This pamphlet analyses why the Community Land Act - legislation sold to the community as the answer to the disaster of property speculation - will in fact do nothing to help working class communities gain the land they need for council housing, schools and other community facilities. The pamphlet includes a simple guide to the Act, an explanation of why land nationalisation is necessary, reports from community groups around the country who are bitterly disappointed with the Act, and shows how the property world is dictating the ways in which the Act will operate. Published by the Land Campaign Working Party, c/o 31, Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Price 35p. 5 for £1.45, 10 for £2.75 (inc. postage).

## HOUSEMOTHER

Kent Womens Aid needs a Residential Housemother for their refuge in Medway. Salary to be negotiated. For further details phone: Day : Medway 49903 Evening : Medway 79094.

## Public Inquiries Guide

A 40 page booklet containing a great deal of information about public inquiries, how they are run and how action groups can organise a case to present to an inquiry. It describes the different types of inquiry - CPO, planning and roads inquiries - outlines the procedure adopted at each, and details the sort of arguments action groups can use in preparing a case for the inquiry. Includes advice on how and when to use solicitors and expert witnesses, and where to find information you may need for your case.

Price: 15p to action groups, 50p to others

## How to use census information

A 6 page leaflet to help tenants and action groups use the mass of information on housing and population contained in the Census reports. Price 9p inc. postage. (Reductions for bulk orders).

Both publications from SCAT, 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

## fighting the cuts

7 issues for £1.20

Screws are on (18)\*: the political motives and choices behind the cuts; the effects they will have the relationship between local and central government: How Local Government works (18): where local authorities get their money; how decisions are made: Editorial and A Cut above the Tories (21): the background of the cuts; what they are; campaigns and reactions against them; how to find out about cuts in your area; campaign roundup: Counter Attack (22) the growing resistance to the cuts; why the city wants them; a summary of government circulars; cuts timetable; campaign roundup; Profit and Loss in the Cuts Account (23): the relationship between cuts, wage restraint and unemployment; what's behind the economic crisis; who profits and who loses; points to help determine tactics for organisation and a action; Cuts Calender (26) Tyneside Action Committee Against the Cuts; lessons learnt: Cuts in New Council housing (27) details of the £1 billion July cuts; Fare Fight - campaign against London bus & tube fare increases; £2.5 billion IMF cuts details (29): Cuts in the health services, cuts campaigns.

## Tenants & Workers Joint Action

3 issues for 60p

Residents and Workers Unite (11): industrial initiatives with community links and community action with industrial or union backing: Tenants and Workers (22): the need for joint action; how to make contact with unions, details of workers organisations: Trades Councils (16): how they work; the role they can play in linking the struggle at work and at home.

# Special Offers

## Fight the Attack on COUNCIL HOUSING

A special Council Housing package including:  
C/A issue nos. 24, 25 & 26 - 50 PAGES  
FULL OF INFORMATION, 1 C/A poster + 5 leaflets plus 2 "Fantasy & Fact" posters. 55p

## heating campaigns

4 issues for 80p

Tenants out in the Cold(11): the drawbacks of modern heating systems on new council estates  
How to beat your Meter(16): how to act against landlords illegally overcharging for supplying gas and electricity: Power to the People(17): how to get out of debt with gas and electricity boards; your rights during and after conversion; squatters rights to supply; deposits; how to complain: Money to burn: whose fuel crisis?(23): how to get help with fuel costs; information on local campaigns; proposals to campaign around; problems experienced by tenants associations and tactics which have and could be used.

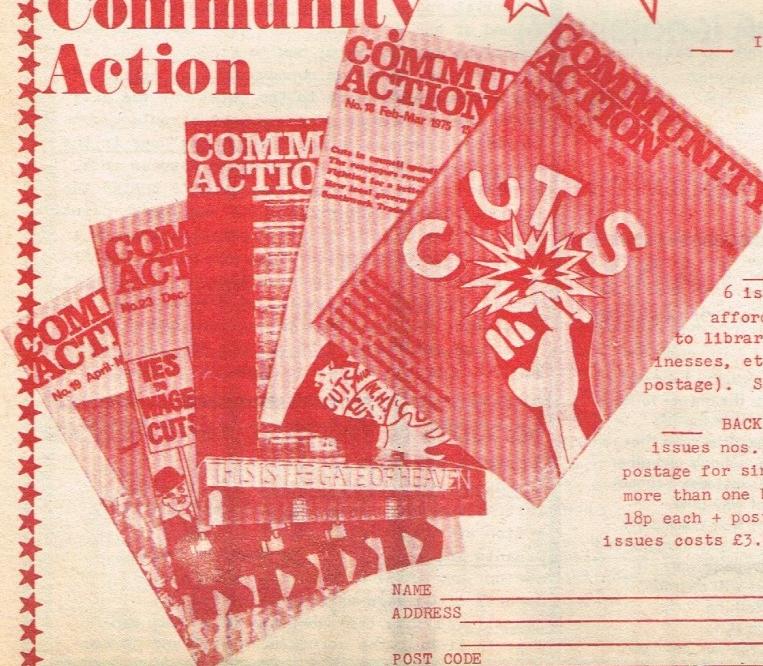
## INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK 30p

A guide for tenants, workers and action groups on how to investigate companies, organisations and individuals. Details hundreds of sources of information and explains where to find it, how to use it.

## DIRECT ACTION & THE POLICE 3 issues for 55p (inc.post)

A three part report on the laws which affect direct action by tenants and community groups and the role of the police in trying to control it.

## SUBSCRIBE to Community Action



HEATING CAMPAIGNS  
4 issues for 80p

TENANTS & WORKERS JOINT ACTION 3 issues for 60p

INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK @ 30p

ACTION & THE POLICE  
3 issues for 55p

FIGHT THE ATTACK ON  
COUNCIL HOUSING @ 55p

FIGHTING THE CUTS  
4 issues for 75p

SUBSCRIPTION (£1.50 for 6 issues, or more if you can afford it. £1.50 abroad. £2.50 to libraries, local authorities, businesses, etc. Single copies 18p+9p postage). Start with issue No. \_\_\_\_\_

BACK ISSUES OF COMMUNITY ACTION issues nos. 9-18 cost 15p each + 10p postage for single copy, 6p per copy for more than one back issue. Nos. 19 to 29 18p each + post. PACKAGE of all back issues costs £3.40. Specify Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

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